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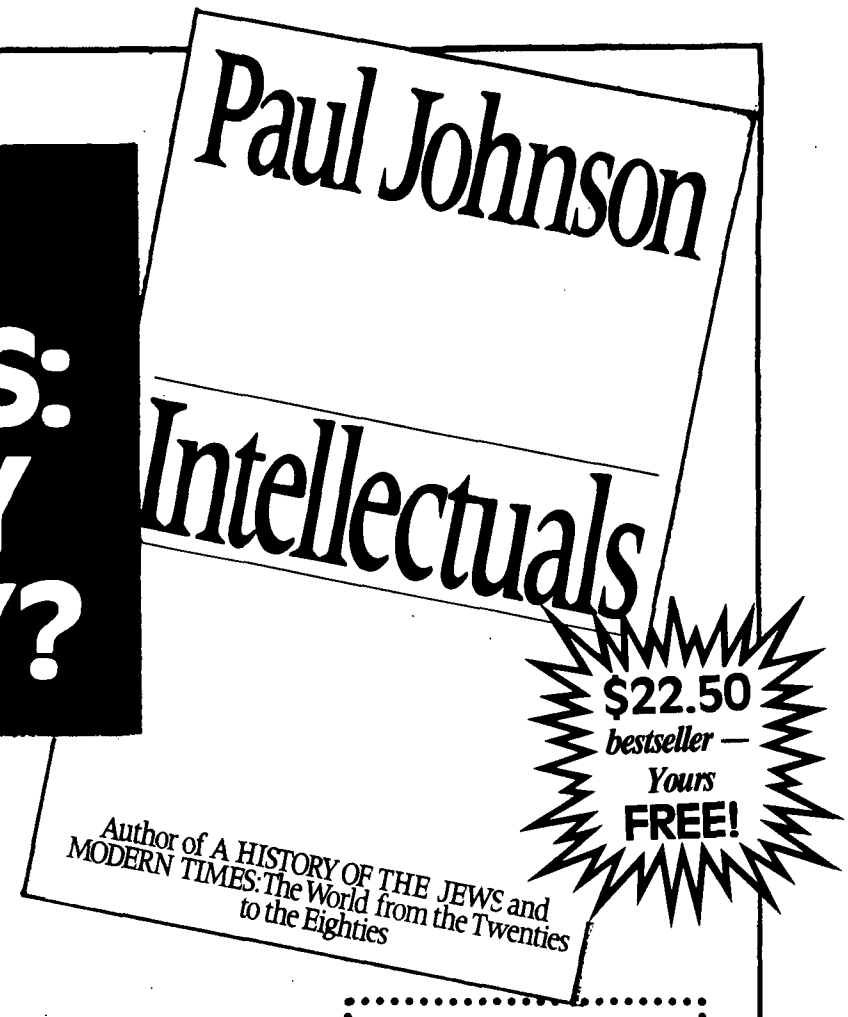
LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS: HOW DO THEY GET THAT WAY?



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The "New" PLO

Or: Can the Leopard Change its Spots?

After more than 20 years of ostracism by most of the civilized world, Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, has finally uttered the "magic words" demanded by the U.S. It didn't come easy, and he didn't get it quite right. But it was good enough for Secretary of State George Schultz who, "the words" having been spoken, declared the willingness of the U.S. to talk with the PLO. One wonders whether that surprising opening will bring peace in the Middle East any closer to realization.

What are the facts?

■ Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, having wrung major concessions from Israel, promised that the U.S. would not deal with the PLO unless it fulfilled two conditions: (1) it would accept U.N. Resolutions 242 and 238; (2) it would recognize Israel's "existence". Congress added a third condition, namely that the PLO would renounce terrorism. Finally, after 20 years of obdurate resistance, Yasir Arafat, as spokesman for the PLO, did make those statements. Secretary Schultz decided therefore that the U.S. must establish contact with the PLO. Only a week earlier, the Secretary had refused Arafat a visa to enter the United States, because of his personal association with and personal responsibility for widespread terrorism all over the world.

■ What are the goals of the PLO, and is it likely that they have changed by the uttering of those three sentences? The PLO is a terror organization, created in 1964 by the Arab League. It has only one aim: the destruction of the State of Israel through force and violence. Any apparent deviation from this single-minded aim is a temporary tactical maneuver.

■ The basic charter of the PLO is the so-called "Palestinian National Covenant." Its main theme is that the State of Israel has no right whatever to exist. It states clearly that "Palestine...is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland" and that "the Arab-Palestinian people...reject all solutions that substitute for the total liberation of Palestine." Those PLO and Arab leaders who have from time to time ventured to propose a less inflexible approach have invariably paid with their lives for such deviation from PLO "orthodoxy."

■ The recent unilateral declaration by the PLO of a "Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem" on territory administered by and under control of Israel is an attempted step in that direction. The PLO was founded long before Israeli administration of Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. Its avowed purpose was then, has always been and continues to be, not the establishment of a Palestinian state, but the destruction of Israel proper.

■ The PLO is the kingpin of international terror. It maintains a complex network of relations with all of the main terror organizations throughout the world. It has written a blood-spattered record of unrelenting terror. Some of their more "glorious" exploits: the mid-air explosion of a Swissair jetliner (47 dead); the attack on pilgrims and passengers at Ben-Gurion International Airport (26 dead, 76 wounded); the attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics (11 dead); attack on the Ma'alot school (24 dead, 62 wounded—mostly children); the hi-jacking of a passenger bus on the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway (35 dead, 80 wounded); the coordinated shoot-outs at the Rome and Vienna Airports (16 dead); and the murderous attack on the Istanbul Synagogue, in which 21 worshippers were killed.

■ In their attacks against Americans, the PLO hand is suspected in many of the kidnappings of U.S. hostages. American citizen Leon Klinghoffer was brutally killed in the PLO ship-jacking of the *Achille Lauro*. Some of the most brutal PLO attacks against Americans have been against U.S. diplomats. In the Sudan, in 1973, two American diplomats, Ambassador Cleo Noel and Chargé d'Affaires George C. Moore, were mercilessly machine gunned to death when blackmail demands were not met. *The Washington Post* reported on reliable evidence that Yasir Arafat personally was in charge of these executions. In 1976, Ambassador Francis Meloy, Jr. and Counselor Robert Waring were assassinated in Beirut, an attack widely believed to have been the work of the PFLP, a faction of the PLO. In March of 1988, a bomb-laden car was placed in front of the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem in an attempt to assassinate Secretary George Shultz. There have been many bombings, hi-jackings, and terrorist attacks in virtually every Mid-East and European country, leaving countless dead and wounded. While the final verdict is not yet in, it is generally assumed by our government and by those who are investigating this terrible crime that one of the Palestinian factions patterned after and instructed by the PLO is responsible for the bombing of Pan Am flight #103, which cost over 270 mostly American lives.

Can the leopard change its spots? It does not seem likely. And it does not seem likely that the PLO, engaged in unrelenting terror since its creation 24 years ago, could suddenly become a factor for peace, just because of the intonation of a few "magic phrases". It is comforting to think that peace in the Middle East can be achieved by bestowing respectability on the PLO. But the only way to bring about peace int he Middle East is by direct negotiations between Israel and representatives of the residents of the administered territories, as agreed in the Camp David Accord: a period of autonomy, after which the final disposition and status of the territories will be decided by the people involved. The PLO cannot be a party to the peace process, because its charter calls for war and destruction and because terror and peace cannot exist together.

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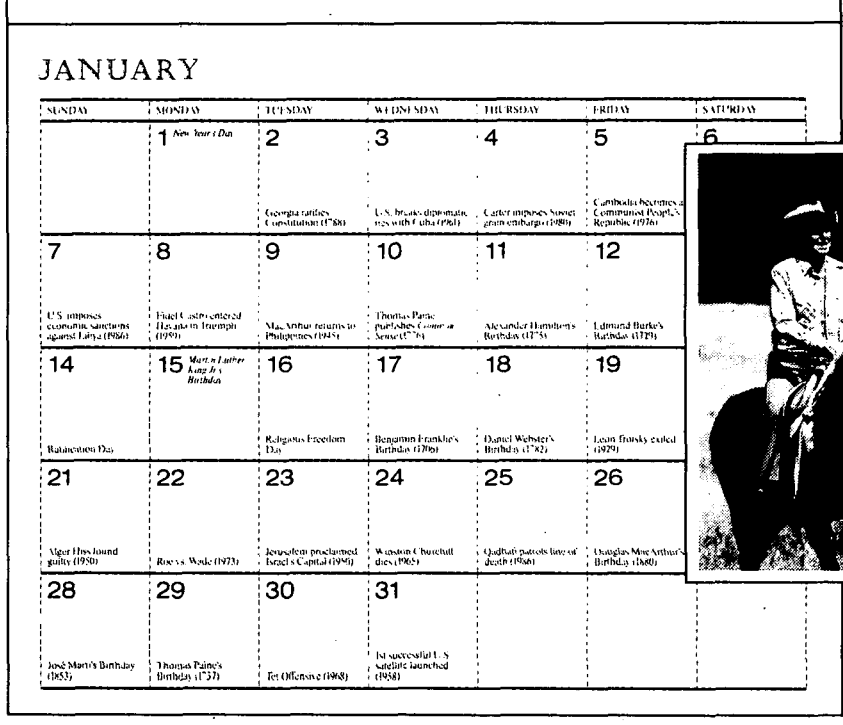

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	1 *New Year's Day*	2 Georgia ratifies Constitution (1788)	3 U.S. breaks diplomatic ties with Cuba (1961)	4 Carter imposes Soviet grain embargo (1980)	5 Cambodia becomes a Communist People's Republic (1976)	6
7 U.S. imposes economic sanctions against Libya (1986)	8 Fidel Castro entered Havana in Triumph (1959)	9 MacArthur returns to Philippines (1945)	10 Thomas Paine purchases Corner at Sewer (1776)	11 Alexander Hamilton's Birthday (1755)	12 Edmund Burke's Birthday (1729)	13
14 Ratification Day	15 *Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday*	16 Religious Freedom Day	17 Benjamin Franklin's Birthday (1706)	18 Daniel Webster's Birthday (1782)	19 Leon Trotsky exiled (1929)	20
21 Alger Hiss found guilty (1950)	22 Roe v. Wade (1973)	23 Jerusalem proclaimed Israel's Capital (1950)	24 Winston Churchill dies (1965)	25 Qadhafi patrols line of death (1986)	26 Douglas MacArthur's Birthday (1880)	27
28 José Martí's Birthday (1853)	29 Thomas Paine's Birthday (1737)	30 Tet Offensive (1968)	31 1st successful U.S. satellite launched (1958)			

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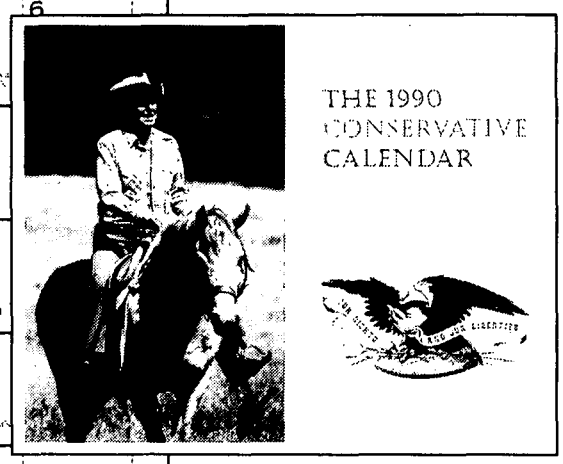

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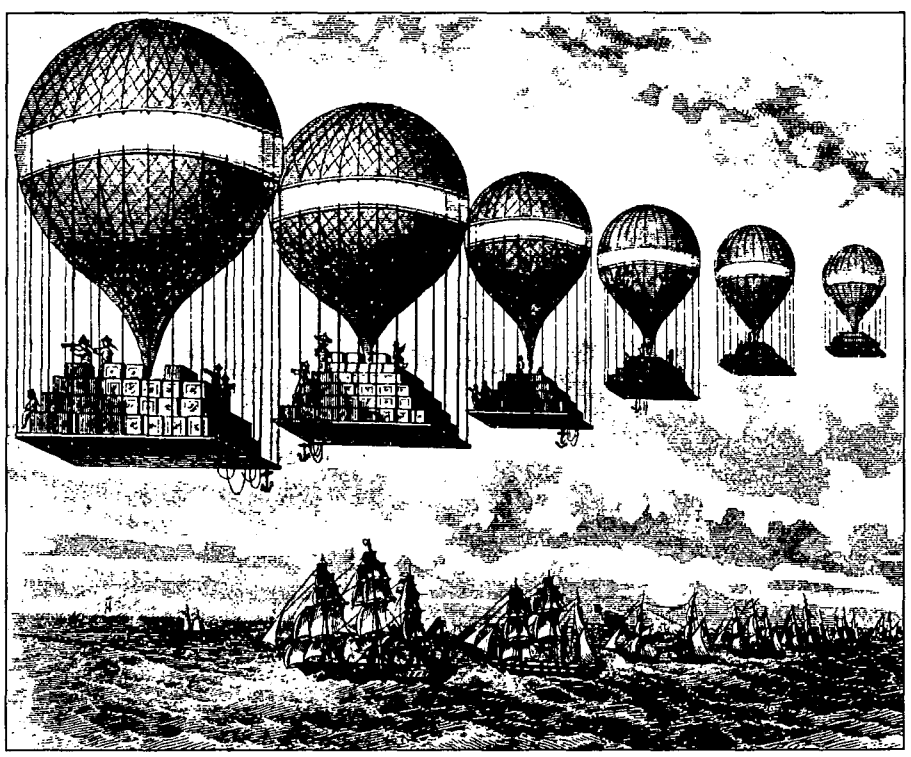
THE CONTINUING CRISIS

• October will be remembered in the annals of American history as the month during which Americans witnessed one of the rarest of modern events, to wit: a legitimate news story—one unassisted by political mountebanks or hype or even a press release. Minutes before the third game of the World Series featuring the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland A's, an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck the Bay Area leaving scores dead and still more injured. It was an appalling tragedy, a reminder that nature's disasters can still take a horrible toll. Yet to relieve the sorrow of the October 17 quake there was the arrival of CBS's Mr. Dan Rather, who again demonstrated in his inimitable way that insanity can be vastly entertaining. Initially, he covered the story from some newsroom somewhere, his demeanor earnest to the point of neurasthenia, his toupee awry, his raiment suggestive of the haberdashery sold in the menswear section of a large drug store—an obvious clip-on tie attached to the collar of his wash-and-wear shirt. Then he donned military attire and stood in the open air, betraying ludicrous *Schadenfreude* whilst murmuring dire prognostications. It is possible that Mr. Rather wears these clip-on ties in response to doctors' orders that he keep his hands away from his throat. Mr. Rather returned to New York without further incident, though the Associated Press has reported that off the coast of Alaska a marine scientist counting fish 690 feet beneath the sea encountered a sunken cow, a Holstein.

• In the aftermath of a failed coup against Panamanian strongman General Manuel Noriega on October 3, twenty-two-year-old Mr. Kurt Rappaport hornswoggled reporters at Los Angeles's KTTV into believing him to be one Sr. Arturo Valdez, a spokesman for a group of anti-Noriega Panamanians, spuriously titled USA-Panama Friendship Council. Now Mr. Rappaport is in dutch with California broadcasters, though his Spanish accent might earn him a shot at the next ad for Colombian coffee. In Sri Lanka's Peradeniya University, student high jinks got out of hand, conducing to the beheading of eighteen students by a local death squad. Stanford University's *Stanford Review* has reported the full details of last spring's university-sponsored condom-rating contest. Apparently, the students involved evaluated seven different condoms on the basis of "smell, taste, appearance, sensualness/comfort, lubrication, and sense of security," though none of the participants actually learned how to wear a condom. This is unfortunate, for the low repute of Stanford University can only decline further if these morons successfully breed. Nor is condom-mania restricted to Stanford's lunatic fringe. At the University of Wisconsin, a Condom Olympics has been held, which according to the *New York Times*, "may not have had the spectacle of Seoul but their goals were just as noble." Events included a "condom water-balloon toss"; a condom relay race wherein "four-member teams carried inflated condoms between their legs"; volleyball with an inflated condom to demonstrate, in the words of the university meathead in charge, "how 'sturdy' condoms are"; and—most felicitous of all—"a condom-over-the-head contest, in which individual contestants vied to show how far they could pull inflated condoms over their heads." Possibly, as Dr. Francis Fukuyama has argued, we are now at "the end of history." Can anyone imagine Dr. Marx returning to the library to write *Das Kapital* after witnessing the Condom Olympics? Or how could Einstein keep his mind on his work after watching a condom relay race by the best and the brightest of his day?

• In Valparaiso, Indiana, the former Mr. Thomas Blankenship, Jr., a professional truck driver, has changed his name to W. C. Fields with riotous consequences for all the fellows what hang out down at the local all-night gas station and family restaurant. In Auburn, New York, when the power failed just as Messrs. Richard and John Contiguglia were about to undertake Franz Liszt's *Grosses Konzertstuck über Mendelssohn's "Liederohne Worte,"* the boys recognized the workings of a supernatural pest. "This is another episode of the curse," remarked Mr. Richard Contiguglia. "It's uncanny how many times something has prevented this song from being played." And to think I had thought Liszt's *Grosses Konzertstuck über Mendelssohn's "Liederohne Worte"* was an imported cheese! Former Congressman Tony Coelho, still smarting from charges that he was entrepreneurial with his public trust, is pledging to avoid the use of his Capitol Hill connections for future gain. Instead he plans to lecture at UCLA and Georgetown University, and he may become a managing director with Wertheim Schroder & Co., the New York investment banking firm—scholarship, that's the life Tony! We all remember your peerless career in academe before you gave yourself over to public service.



• In New York City's Wagner housing project eight men ambushed Mr. Lim Chen Yoong, 33, a deliveryman for a local Chinese restaurant, covered his eyes, and stabbed him four times before making off with buckets of chop suey and his delivery bicycle. "To cause four stab wounds for Chinese food is amazing," opined Housing Sgt. Bruce Ehrenkranz in a shockingly ethnocentric statement that could yet become another of New York's racial rows. Columbus Day passed quietly in the United States, but in El Salvador the enlightened National Association of Indigenous Salvadorans demonstrated in front of a tasteless statue of Christopher Columbus to protest the "negative effects of Columbus' arrival." As winter approaches, thousands of homeless persons have begun gathering on the steps of New York City's churches and synagogues, suggesting that perhaps the most prudent resolution of the problem of the homeless might be merely to shut down all these unwholesome gathering places until the present crisis passes. Private prayer, after all, is just as efficacious as public prayer, and the muttering throngs now frequenting these houses of worship—I am not speaking of parishioners but only of the homeless—are not to be encouraged with meals or, as has become the custom with some of the more Liberal denominations, Porto-Potties.

• To the surprise of no one, entomologists at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture have reported that this past summer Connecticut suffered a veritable plague of wasps. In Bordentown Township, New Jersey, an investigation is under way to discover how Mr. Gilbert T. Godbout, 44, survived when a runaway paving roller ran over him while he slept in a wooded area. Authorities have not ruled out the possibility that the manufacturer of the paving roller deceived them as to the machine's weight and effectiveness. And in Salt Lake City, citizens of a progressive cast of mind remain divided over State Trooper Scott Smith, who upon observing a drowning baby kangaroo—called a joey—in the city zoo leaped the fence, rescued the joey, and

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duly administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Some think Trooper Smith a new hero in the animal rights crusade, but there are others, their minds filled with lurid tales of what American males really do to children and to women, who cannot banish the thought that Trooper Smith had abandoned himself to dark passions.

• Detroit's 71-year-old mayor, the Hon. Coleman A. Young, inspired many senior citizens by signing a paternity accord with the mother of his six-year-old child. In Washington, President George Bush signed legislation transforming into a national historic site the Missouri estate where Ulysses S. Grant and his wife lived from 1854 to 1860, a period referred to by some Grant biographers as "The Alcoholic Years" or "The Alcoholic Years I." Civil libertarians may be making a test case for "the right to slouch" after police in Selma, Alabama, having failed once during a strip-search to find illicit drugs on the corpulent person of Mr. Zerben R. Hicks, 21, ordered the mortified Mr. Hicks to stand up straight, whereupon a corner of a bag of cocaine was spotted wedged between the folds of his stomach skin. Mr. Hicks weighs 275 pounds. In Plant City, Florida, Dr. Walter Enslen Shackelford, a chiropractor of heretofore irreproachable record, is under fire for his practice of inducing "harmonial stimulation" by fondling the vaginal areas of his comely patients. In fact, Dr. Shackelford has been arrested. In Naples, Florida, Mr. Kenneth Worles Thompson, the blithe spirit whose driver's license had been suspended after his sixth arrest for driving under the influence, is now barred from the use of his 10-horsepower lawn mower. According to the Naples Gestapo, he ran a red light in his Ferrari-red Toro at a major intersection and was booked for the usual offense. Finally, on October 23, the Soviet Union ended a decade of disputing the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page's claim that its Krasnoyarsk radar station violated the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty when Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze admitted to the violation. Now will Mr. Anthony Lewis and the usual crowd of carping hansdoodles apologize to the *Journal* for their many rudenesses? —*RET*

CORRESPONDENCE

Some Nerve!

I found Mr. Geoffrey Coram's letter to the editor ("Correspondence," *TAS*, October 1989) to be, in his words, "very repulsive." Coram claims that "We [National Merit] Finalists are far too intelligent to subscribe to your right-wing Republican magazine." Though I don't claim to be the genius that Coram apparently would have us believe he is (a rather doubtful concept), this is one National Merit Finalist who is both proud and honored to be among the subscribers to *TAS*, Dan Quayle parodies aside. Mr. Coram should be more forgiving. He should forgive *TAS* for inviting him to subscribe, just as I have forgiven the National Merit Scholarship Corporation for choosing him as a Finalist. We all make mistakes!

—Debbie Schlussel
1986 National Merit Finalist
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Brat Pack Backer

Alex Heard would have the reader of his article ("Brat Pack II," *TAS*, October 1989) believe that people don't write books, but rather books—such as Mr. Schwartz's and Mr. Ames's—somehow happen, come out of some nebulous somewhere for the sole purpose of being *processed* like Twinkies by a conspiratorial publishing leviathan.

One initially wonders what exactly Mr. Heard writes in Washington to give him such a perspective on publishing which excludes original observation or mere cognizance of his own participation in the conspiracy his essay(?) purports to examine.

It is interesting to note that the majority of Mr. Heard's analysis focuses on his presumptions to knowledge concerning the process rather than interpretive knowledge of the books themselves. Oh, he's read them of course and he devotes space to the obligatory synopsis, but it is obvious that Mr. Heard is more interested in *Bicycle Days* and *I Pass Like Night* for how they can fuel what he attempts to doff off to us as his most singular vision into the very core of the wayward networking industry producing them.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Heard did not incorporate into his article what should be his most acute awareness, that along with the writers and the Ivy League schools and the well-connected mentors and the superagents and the editors and publishing houses (which make up his rather romantic networking conspiracy) come on cue—the Brat Pack I or II—whoever—critics, exhibiting exactly that which they criticize their objects for: transitory imitation which dominates a moment of public attention—except that the writing of books takes infinitely more time, more imagination, and more guts.

One minor observation strengthens the overall distrustfulness one must bring to such writing: Mr. Heard compares Mr. Ellis's looks to Nixon's—a direct *Spy* magazine rip-off without appropriate attribution—and his rather awkwardly phrased "sameness" chart is, unbelievably, another, although less direct, *Spy* rip-off (the forthcoming *Spy Notes*).

Mr. Heard is almost unconscious in his use of similar Brat Pack technique and convention to (inadequately) fry that which he is determined to have us eat, yet he disguises it so poorly that one is forced to demur and conclude that Mr. Heard, like so many others, prepared his baste with a bit too much envy.

There is hope, however. The critics of such work will, too, disappear as fast as they predict their ironic mentors will—and then what will they do for a living? Horrors! They may try their hands at writing books!

—S. W. Mason
New York, New York

Congratulations, Mr. Tyrrell

RET's September article, "The Real Environmentalist" (the hunter, the fisherman, the outdoorsman), comes as a pleasant surprise to me. It's a fact that for years hunters, fishermen, and outdoorsmen have been ignored or denigrated by some of today's dilettantes who label themselves "environmentalists." But equally disgraceful is the fact that all too few of us (conservatives) have articulated a responsible, reasonable conservation/environmental ethic. For whatever reason, the liberals (read Democrats) hold the high ground on those issues.

We conservatives, and certainly the Republican Platform Committee, have not developed a perspicacious policy to address the management and wise use of those critical, fragile assets—our renewable and non-renewable natural resources—that are often irreplaceable ingredients of our wonderful heritage. To the contrary, we do indeed frequently *appear* to wear the "black hat," disreputable scofflaws responsible for destroying our surroundings.

This conservative/Republican conservation non-conscience, as *perceived* by most Americans, is unacceptable. Our ideology is dominated by the conviction that one has the inalienable right to develop and do with one's property as one sees fit, irrespective of damage caused to the environment—present and future generations be damned! Certainly we can do much better than that!

There is an army of environmental organizations flying the liberal banner—supported in the political arena preponderantly by Democrats, but where are the *visible* conservative/Republican advocates who champion the cause of land, air, water, and wildlife?

—Herman J. Koehler III
Boonton, New Jersey

The Yellowstone Fires

Please refer to Micah Morrison's article, "The Yellowstone Scam," in your August issue.

The National Park Service has undoubtedly tried to put the best face possible on the tragedy of the Yellowstone fires, so Morrison is probably right that they have concealed the mistakes made and the harmful effects of the fires. But he needs to get his biological facts straight. . . .

The serotinous property of lodgepole pine cones has been known to forest scientists for many years, and not one, but many studies of the lodgepole pine cone and seed production have been made. Throughout the northern Rocky Mountain region, the cones are generally serotinous, but stands without serotinous cones can be found. In stands with serotinous cones, individual trees may have both kinds or a preponderance of either kind.

Cone production begins at an early tree age and the cones remain mostly closed on the trees for many years. Also, seeds remain viable in the closed cones for years. Thus, when the inevitable lightning-caused fire finally occurs, the heat melts the resin holding the cones' scales together and hundreds of thousands if not millions of seeds are dumped on the ground. And a burned soil surface is an excellent seedbed. The result is a dense stand of seedlings.

In stands with a mixture of species including a substantial percentage of lodgepole pine, the stand following fire tends to be pure lodgepole because the associated species do not have serotinous cones and their seed is destroyed by the fire. Thus, fire favors lodgepole pine with serotinous cones, which accounts for the extensive stands of the species in the Yellowstone "ecosystem."

Morrison would find it instructive to visit some older burns in the northern Rocky Mountain region. Many have

(continued on page 57)

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EDITORIALS

LIFE IS IMITATION

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Listening to the heroic declamations pronounced at the University of Virginia late last September by our President, governors, and educators during the nation's "education summit" put me in mind of the poet Wordsworth. All life is imitation, he concluded regretfully in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Things could be worse; the youth of Wordsworth's time could have lived in a world where there were no examples worth imitating.

Most of the eminences gasconading at the "education summit" about the glory of education, and about the urgent steps they will take to impose education on the nation's youth, spoke of education as though it were a highly technical procedure that America's young people must undergo even as they undergo orthodontics. Then, upon graduation, they can heave their books aside forever, as they pass on to the real purposes of life, such as making money, gaining political office, and becoming dreadful scolds on the subject of education. Very few of the officials holding forth at the University of Virginia last September have demonstrated that they believe education is for adults too. Life is imitation, and when it comes to intellect or the life of the educated mind, our public figures offer American youth very little to imitate.

In recent years, few American leaders have demonstrated the relish for learning that might inspire young people to tackle their education with enthusiasm. In the early 1960s, it is my sad duty to report, the Kennedys showed a genuine concern for learning and the cultivation of intellect. In the Kennedy Administration there were actually officials who read books and spoke of this vice in public. No Republican administration yet has thought of emulating the Hickory Hill Seminars, wherein Attorney General Robert Kennedy would bring together twenty or so cabinet members, agency chiefs, and lesser government officials, the purpose of which was, as my good friend Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. puts it in *A Thousand Days*, to hear "an authority speak on a subject of his own choosing so long as it did not involve the day-to-day business of government." Having already read up on the evening's topic, the assembled would discuss it once the speaker had shut down.

The idea was to stimulate thought on a range of subjects beyond the immediate concern of government in the hope that such thinking might assist the assembled in bringing high intelligence to their work. Last September at the University of Virginia we were told that unless American education improves, business leaders fear that future American workers will not bring sufficient intelligence to the workplace to allow American business to compete internationally. American students in academic competition with the students of other industrialized countries fare badly. American business leaders, logically enough, blame the educators.

Yet I would spread the blame beyond the educators to the so-called educated. In practically every realm of intellectual endeavor customarily associated with the educated mind, Americans display ever less rigor, perseverance, and high intelligence. Our literature is generally as banal as the literature of any waitress in any American truckstop ever heard of. Music is trivial, and what we call art can no longer even claim the appeal of being bizarre or absurd. Books are poorly edited, magazines publish pish-posh, and television threatens wherever an electrical outlet is near.

If the Kennedys ever invade the White House again it is doubtful they could revive the Hickory Hill Seminars at the high level they once attained. Most of the luminaries they brought in are now defunct. Their contemporary replacements do not measure up, save the scientists, the engineers, and other slaves to the technically verifiable. Yet this Republican President could give such seminars a try. He and the governors and educators could demonstrate their own devotion to intellect by making it clear that in their off-hours they read and pursue what art is available in the land. Life, as the poet said, is imitation. Let those public officials concerned with American education give our students something intelligent to imitate. □

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post *column syndicated by King Features.*

KINSLEY DOES IT AGAIN

Alas, Michael Kinsley has stepped into another of those ignominious controversies that have so frequently enlivened his restless career as editor and pundit. Kinsley has been editor of *Harper's* and the *New Republic* off and on for nearly a decade. He is an essayist for *Time* magazine, a fixture on political talk shows; and he now is departing the *New Republic* for daily combat with Pat Buchanan on CNN. He is a Liberal of the New Breed, which is to say he is very tricky about what he really believes in but tireless in his derision of all manifestations of that which is conservative. He also is given to assaults on the more artless forms of residual Liberalism; but as to his own Liberal convictions he is coy.

As a New Breed Liberal he is somewhat the moralist; at least he is absorbed with the morals of others. That is why his controversies are so curious. They rarely arise over matters of high principle but rather over matters of low taste or no principle. There was the row at *Harper's* during which he apologized for calling Clare Boothe Luce a "courtesan" in a headline, and the time he suggested that a distinguished lady writer was a tart of inferior intellect. Now in the *New Republic* Kinsley has published one Jefferson Morley's puerile confession to a pleasurable experience with crack, which is but one of the drugs Morley obviously knows well. That is one controversy. Another should be Kinsley's devious defense of his act in a *Washington Post* column that misrepresents and abuses drug czar William Bennett for appraising the Morley piece as "garbage."

Being devious is characteristic of Kinsley's controversies. In defending his crack-smoker's confession, Kinsley says: "The article did not urge anyone to use crack, did not say crack should be legalized and did not say drugs are not a serious national problem." Yes, and it did not say that if you step on a crack you will break your mother's

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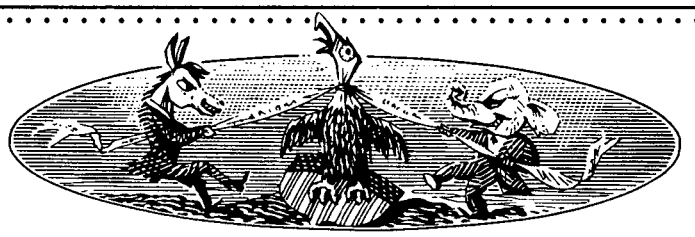
back. There are many foolish and discreditable things this article did not say, but this assertion from Kinsley merely misleads readers. What has him in hot water is what the article *did* say.

It recommended crack and rationalizes its use. Equally contemptible, it failed to balance these affronts with admonitions helpful to the present campaign against drugs. "When it comes to crack, politicians and pundits literally do not know what they are talking about," Morley chides. One can say the same about taking arsenic, but that ought not to deter politicians and pundits from denouncing suicide, and I know of no one who is taken more seriously on the topic for having attempted suicide. But having smoked crack, Morley goes on to lay claim to a special authority regarding it. "Having been through the experience, though, may facilitate [sic] a certain realism about the conflict in question."

According to Morley, "Crack is a pleasure both powerful and elusive. Smoke a rock and, for the next 20 minutes, you will likely appreciate sensuous phenomena ranging from MTV to neon lights to oral sex with renewed urgency." Then the venerable pages of the *New Republic* are transformed into a *Consumer Reports* for narcotics connoisseurs: "As you smoke your second rock, it may strike you that the crack high combines the best aspects of marijuana and cocaine. The pleasure of pot is not just a high, but a buzz; smoke a joint and space out. Cocaine, in contrast, is a clear high, a stimulant to sociality. . . ." But enough—these are the cerebrations of a lowlife yuppie, deficient in dignity, sophistication, and, well, literacy. Later Morley offers that "If all you have in life is [he means are] bad choices, crack may not be the most unpleasant of them."

As I say, the piece recommends and rationalizes crack. Egad, argues the sorely pressed Kinsley, the article's "purpose . . . was to describe what a crack high is like," and bravely to admit that crack is pleasurable. But who needs instruction on that? Only a naif would be unaware that narcotics are pleasurable. Actually, all vice is pleasurable, else vice would not be pursued. It is the mark of the New Breed Liberal to have low taste and at best only emaciated principle, but there is one thing more. To argue so fluently on behalf of Morley one has to have a mind that is tilted toward inaccuracy. There is a flaw in Kinsley's brain. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



REPORT FROM BRITAIN

by Tom Bethell

From time to time a number of readers have been kind enough to ask about my sister, last heard of in these pages encamped outside Greenham Common protesting the deployment of cruise missiles in the county of Berkshire. (These protests were successful, coinciding as they did with the arms control enthusiasms of the American and European establishments; the missiles are now being removed.) Recently I returned to England for a visit, and this year I traveled north to see my sister Magdalen and her husband, Rob, who live near Rochdale, in Lancashire. I congratulated her on the cruise success, reminding her that the Greenham ladies had found an unlikely ally in Ronald Reagan. But for her this was all water under the bridge.

Magdalen has become a "green"—the latest thing in radical politics in England, apparently. The Labourites have sold out, she told me. They no longer support unilateral nuclear disarmament. At the recent Labour party conference the socialist firebrand Ken Livingstone was kicked off the party's national executive committee. Apparently Labour wants to win the next election more than it wants to rid Britain of all things nuclear. Hence the switch to the greens by purists like my sister.

Magdalen kept close at hand a "terrifying" book called *No Immediate Danger: Prognosis for Radioactive Earth*, by someone called Rosalie Bertell and published in 1985 by the Women's Press. One section, entitled "Omnicide: The Stark Reality of Species Death," gives an idea of its overall contents.

"The leukemia hot spots definitely coincide with all the nuclear power stations," Magdalen said to her husband.

"Not true," said Rob, tentatively "green" himself these days but skeptically so. "There's a hot spot in the center of London."

They were very concerned about a British power station called Sellafield, somewhere on the Lancashire coast. Here the authorities have boldly adopted a bull-by-the-horns advertising strategy, taking people on guided tours of the plant to "try and make nuclear power acceptable." Mag was thrilled that Greenpeace riposted by "blocking their discharge pipes with concrete."

Mag and I were in agreement that, in addition to the cruise missiles, all other American weapons and troops should be pulled out of Western Europe. Forty-five years is long enough! Rob had qualms about this, however. Not so fast, he cautioned. The peace that has prevailed, etc. But Mag and I formed a united front against him. I told her that the redoubtable conservative columnist, Patrick J. Buchanan, had now come over to our side and was leading the charge in America for a saner U.S. foreign policy. I couldn't resist adding that it was also high time for the British Army of the Rhine to withdraw from West Germany. (At a NATO conference in Brussels last year I was told by a senior adviser to the British defense minister that these troops are intended not so much to keep an eye on the Russians as on the Germans—something that very few people in Britain understand.)

Rob and Mag were united against me, however, in their joy over the travails of Mrs. Thatcher and the Conservative party, whose annual conference was taking place in Blackpool, not too many miles away, even as we spoke.

While I was in England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, raised interest rates to 15 percent, in his ongoing and largely futile attempt to subdue inflation. Interest rates in Britain have been rising steadily for about two years now, and are back to 1981 levels. It is safe to say that if they persist at this level the Conservative government will lose the next election (probably in 1991), and the first major attempt by any British government in this century to transfer power from the state back to individuals will be brought to an end. The new pragmatism of the Labour party makes this unhappy prospect all the more likely, of course. In the latest Gallup poll, Labour is ten points ahead.

One Thatcherite who remains undaunted by the economic news is Stephen Haseler. I spent an evening with him and his wife in London. A founding member of the Social Democratic party, Haseler is now a co-chairman of the recently formed Radical Society, and the author of a newly published book, *The Battle for Britain: Thatcher and the New Liberals*. Haseler and the Radicals (a small but influential group) understand what so few on the left in Britain seem to have grasped (or perhaps they grasped it all too well), that the movement toward free markets is not at all "conservative" but calculated to achieve the very classless society that the socialists ostensibly wanted. But all along, it now seems, the left preferred a society based on status to one based on contract. The House of Lords and even the monarchy are institutions that socialists are surprisingly comfortable with. Their real goal has been a society in which a privileged minority has the power to organize the lives of the majority. In this they see eye to eye with many Tories, whose privileges and protections are likewise at risk. "The traditional aristocratic establishment has never been so threatened," Haseler writes. "The middle-class professionals, the arts, the universities, the broadcast media, are all affected by the new radicalism."

But the Thatcher government and program will not long survive 15 percent interest rates. Variable-rate mortgages are the rule in Britain, and for many members of the home-owning middle class, monthly pay-

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator*'s Washington correspondent.*

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ments have doubled in the past year or so. Some have had to sell their homes. A decisive percentage will undoubtedly defect to one or another rival party at the next election unless a remedy is soon found.

I am convinced that the cause of persistent inflation in Britain (and in other Western countries), comparable to a low-grade fever that never quite goes away, is to be found in the tax code. Ever since Keynesian theory in the 1930s declared savings to be bad for economic health, the tax codes of Western countries have penalized savings, taxing away interest received, and permitting interest paid (on home mortgages) to be deducted from income for tax purposes. Fifty-three years after Keynes published his *General Theory*, these cockeyed incentives are still embedded in the tax codes of Western countries. Reform appears to be stymied by the constant, intimidating threat of leftist appeals to envy. (Tax-free interest will "only help the rich.") In Britain the situation is particularly bad. The top income tax rate was reduced in 1987 from 60 to 40 percent, but this is encountered at moderate income levels, and all savings accounts are taxed at the marginal income tax rate.

Writing in the *Sunday Times* while I was in Britain, Brian Walden, a former Labour member of Parliament and now a leading Thatcherite and member of the Radical Society, confirmed my view of Britain's economic problem: "The British spend their money and do not save it," he wrote.

They do this not because of some innate fecklessness, but because nearly everything in our economic and fiscal system induces them to do so. Our inability to keep inflation under control for prolonged periods means that savers are robbed of a considerable part of their savings. On the other hand, if they are debtors they are helped by inflation and do not have to repay the full value of their debt.

A truly dramatic fiscal change is required. It is no good the Treasury bringing forth piddling measures hedged about with a mass of restrictions and mean-minded exemptions. Such measures will make no impact whatsoever on the psychology of the average taxpayer. What is called for is the sweeping away of most taxation on savings. An attention-catching fiscal inducement to save has become a national imperative.

With such a change, the velocity of circulation of money would slow down, and inflation and interest rates would certainly decline. Revenue might be lost, but this hardly matters as the government today is running a huge budget surplus, the Laffer Curve having once again been proved correct: the income tax rate reduction was followed by a massive surge in revenue. (Notice that the British experience today makes nonsense of the oft-repeated claim that budget deficits are inflationary.)

Walden is undoubtedly correct that such a policy change is now imperative, and the next budget (March 1990) is probably the last chance that Mrs. Thatcher will have to implement it. Unfortunately she has been expending political capital in pushing for much less important measures—water privatization, for example, and a reform of the local tax structure. The latter involves a shift from a property tax to a "poll" or per capita tax, not a bad idea in itself but a highly unpopular one, and to date costly for Thatcher. A broadly based tax exemption on savings interest would be unpopular with the Treasury civil servants, who continue to wield vast influence over policy, but it would go down well with the middle class.

(Here let me note some supply-side dissent. Alan Reynolds of Polyconomics recently wrote an article about the British economy in which he argued that the monetary errors of Chancellor Lawson can only be corrected by monetary policy. "It is the only tool that works," he writes—words that will give pleasure to Milton Friedman. Reynolds points out that Britain lacks bank-reserve requirements—ditto Switzer-

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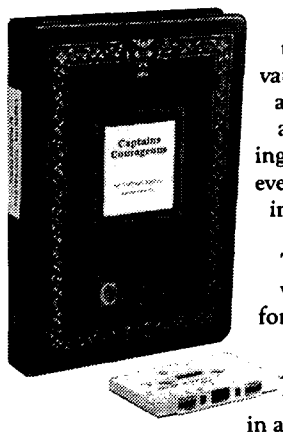

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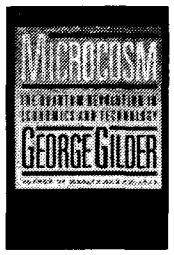

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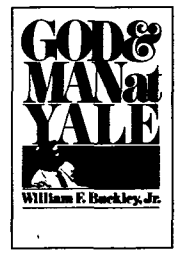

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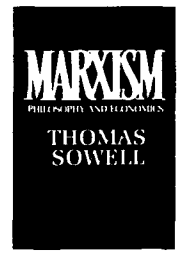

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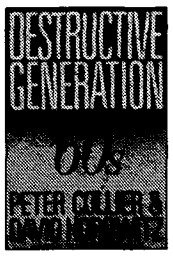

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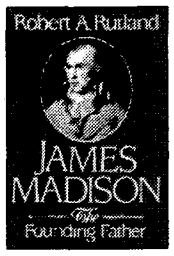

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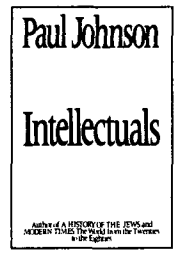

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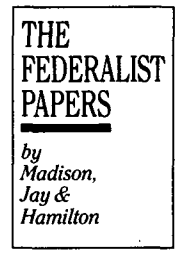

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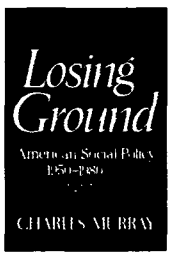

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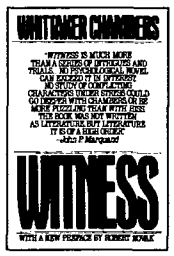

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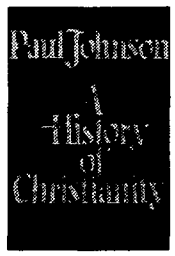

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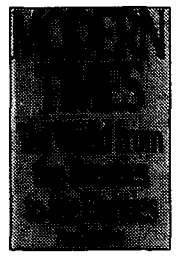
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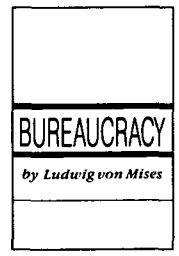

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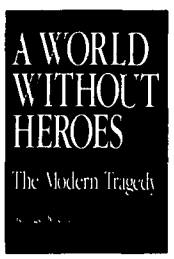

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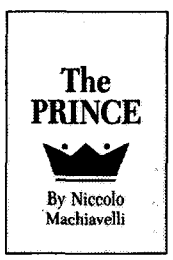

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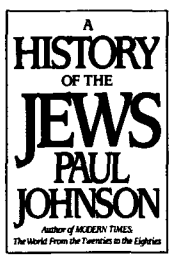

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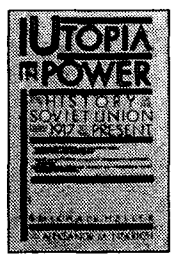

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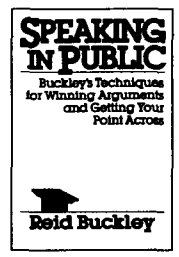

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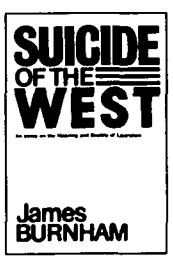

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land since early 1988—and that in their absence raising interest rates does not curtail monetary growth but *does* crunch down on the real economy. "Engineering a reduction of real supply through high interest rates . . . simply makes inflation worse," Reynolds writes. "The result is stagflation." But Reynolds told me that he would not oppose the introduction of savings incentives in Britain.)

Another issue, much discussed in the U.S. press in the past year, deserves a second look today. I refer to the anticipated "United States of Europe" by 1992. Americans (and Britons, too) have been led to suppose that this is above all a promise of deregulation to come, with a common market, free trade, the elimination of tariff barriers, the abolition of passports, and so on. But one or two newspaper articles that came out while I was in England suggested that this may not be the outcome at all. Intuitively, we should suspect that something else is afoot. Is it likely, after all, that the huge Brussels bureaucracy and the European Parliament (increasingly filled with socialist delegates, because in Britain at least most conservatives don't bother to vote in European elections) will be content to *de*regulate the lives of the taxpayers they sponge off?

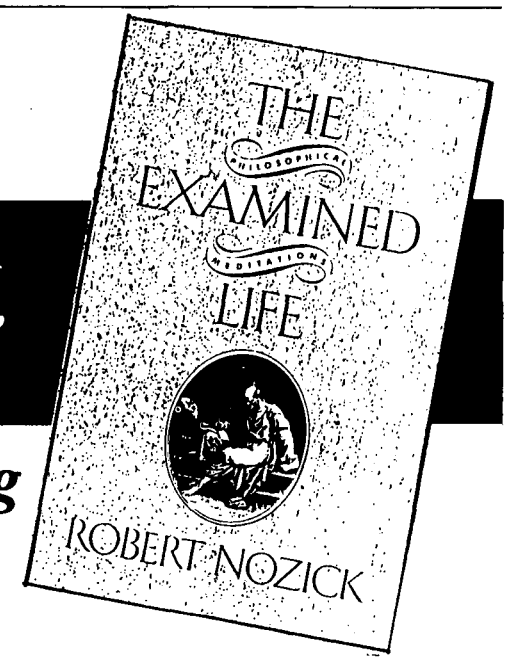
"A good deal has come to light since we accepted the Single European Act," W. F. Deedes wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*. "Indeed, hardly a day passes without some fresh surprising signal from Brussels of what will now be expected of us. M. Jacques Delors himself predicts that a decade from now 80 percent of legislation will pass from national parliaments to Brussels. I recall no mention of that when the Single European Act was moving through the House."

Americans have expressed repeated concern that they will be excluded from a Hayekian free-market paradise in 1992. More realistically, they should consider that a serious attempt will be made to centralize power in Brussels, with myriad minute regulations interfering with everyone's lives—a supranationalism that is deregulatory on the surface but dirigiste in intent. (Wheelchair ramps up the Alps, I wouldn't be surprised.)

Simon Jenkins wrote in the *Sunday Times*: "[Mrs. Thatcher] knows that her [European] partners see in the Delors plan not free markets but a furthering of their banking and industrial cartels, a clipping of the wings of their corrupt political parties and, for Italy, Spain and Greece, a vast dollop of subsidy. The more elitist among them see a new Napoleonic order, dirigiste, protectionist, democratic in form but not in content. . . . To all of this Mrs. Thatcher can only offer a bland nationalism, derided by her opponents as Little Englander, old fashioned, unprogressive. Her realism they portray as a lack of idealism, her honesty as a lack of diplomacy. The devil of internationalism has all the best tunes, as well as the best lunches." Thatcher could yet make nationalistic hay of the danger, but she had better hurry up about it.

The Archbishop of Canterbury recently made some remarks about capitalism that were so stale and predictable (too "materialistic," not enough "compassion," cheap shoes from abroad are made by children) that a number of journalists couldn't resist jeering. ("Has Dr. Runcie asked the children concerned if they would rather starve?") In her speech to the Conservative party conference, Mrs. Thatcher made a more interesting point about the distinction between selfishness and the pursuit of individual (as opposed to state-directed) goals. But the big surprise came on the day before I left England—a *Times* article by John Habgood entitled "Fatal Flaw in Socialism," in praise of F. A. Hayek himself. Who is John Habgood? The Archbishop of York! Perhaps all is not lost. □

"I want to think about living and what is important in life..."



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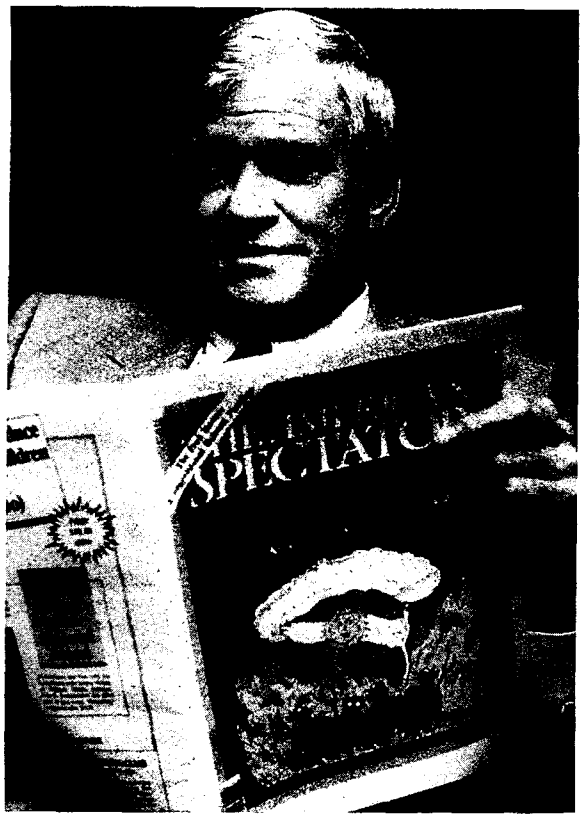

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P. J. O'Rourke

PUT US IN MENTAL INSTITUTIONS, PLEASE!

A Washington homebody reports on the antics of those perennially indignant "Housing Now!" marchers, whose snake oil will ensure that in time we might all be made homeless.

October 7 witnessed the "National March for Housing Now!" in Washington, D.C. The demonstrators seemed sincere in their desire to solve the various habitation cost and dwelling availability problems we have in the United States. The organized labor contingent carried banners calling for a uniform national building code, increased factory mass-production of modular homes, stricter Taft-Hartley anti-featherbedding regulation, and a federal right-to-work law. Housing advocates, community activists, and welfare rights organizers led the crowd in chants:

Apartments, yes!
Shelters, no!
Rent control has got to go!

Quit your whining,
Stop your dithers,
Sell public housing to the highest bidders!

We're sick of living in a ditch,
Give real estate tax breaks back to the rich!

While Tracy Chapman sang a song from her new album:

Oh, Mr. Congressman, please can't you see
You gotta stop giving me that AFDC
I did the lovin'
I had the fun
Mr. Congressman, let me pay for this little young 'un.

And thousands of homeless men and women waved signs reading "JAIL US, WE'RE DRUNK" and "WE ARE CRAZY. PUT US IN MENTAL INSTITUTIONS, PLEASE."

The actual "National March for Housing Now!" didn't have thousands of homeless men and women or even hundreds, as far as I could see. At the pre-march rally beside the Washington Monument I did hear one woman say she was homeless. She was a big, resentful woman—the kind that's always behind the counter at the Department of Motor Vehicles when you go to renew your car registration. She was co-chairhuman of something-or-other, and she was declaiming from the podium: "I've got five kids! We live in one room! We're homeless!" No, m'am, you're not. Your housing may be as bad as your family planning, but you're not homeless.

The rest of the demonstrators seemed to come from normal homes, that is, the kind of homes that demonstrators usually come from—homes where they had sufficient resources to become half-educated and adequate leisure to hate their parents. They were all present and accounted for:

- World Council of Churches sensible-shoe types who have self-righteousness the way some people have bad breath.
- Angry black poverty pests making a life and a living off the misfortunes of others.
- Even angrier feminists doing their best to feminize poverty before the blacks use it all up.
- Earnest neophyte Marxists, hands grubby from littering the Mall with ill-Xeroxed tracts and eyes glazed from dialectical epiphanies.
- College bohos dressed in black to show how gloomy the world is when you're a 19-year-old rich kid.
- Young would-be hippies dressed exactly like old would-be hippies used to dress (remarkable how behind the times the avant garde has gotten).
- And some of those old would-be hippies themselves, faded jeans straining beneath increasing paunches, hair still tied into a pony tail in the back but gone forever on the top.

Together these people constitute America's only true, permanent underclass—the Perennially Indignant Left. As usual, they were joined by greedy celebrities who aren't content with fame and money and want a reputation for moral goodness, too.

The labor unions were also on hand, but their members stood away to one side in well-pressed sport clothes and snappy nylon windbreakers embossed with the names of their locals. The UAW, AFSCME, Steelworkers, and various building trades each had neat stacks of professionally made picket signs. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers even brought along its kilted bagpipe band. The plump, scrubbed union folk, enjoying a subsidized bus trip with their softball buddies, were as out of place as yarmulkes on a motorcycle gang. And more power to them. If government is going to flash the cash at homelessness, I'd like at least some of the money to go to people who hold jobs.

That morning, as I was going out the door of my own housing—which is handsome, spacious, and frankly underpriced due to the District of Columbia Housing Act of 1985 which, in the name of keeping D.C. homes "affordable," instituted rent ceilings which have led to the destruction of rental stock in the less affluent sections of the city while providing a cost-of-living subsidy to rich, unfeeling conservatives like myself. But I di-

P. J. O'Rourke is author, most recently, of Modern Manners *(Atlantic Monthly Press).*

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gress. . . . As I was going out the door, my girlfriend said, "Will there be lots of people from South Carolina at the housing march?"

I said, "Huh?"

"You know," she said, "where Hurricane Hugo just destroyed everybody's house." My girlfriend doesn't pay much attention to political activism, considering it as interesting as growing algae in a jar. She is also, like many women, under the impression that mankind is as rational and pragmatic as women are. Thus, she's forever asking silly questions which go right to the heart of the matter. No, darling, there won't be any people from South Carolina at the housing march—*they're too busy building homes.*

The big, resentful woman I mentioned earlier went on to extol a group of what appeared to be just plain street bums called "The New Exodus Marchers" who had walked to D.C. from New York. When the New Exodus people arrived in Washington they promptly got into a fistfight at the Center for Creative Non-Violence, the fight apparently having something to do with disposition of royalty proceeds from the sale of "Homeless" T-shirts. (I am not making this up.) Ms. Big Resentful said, "Five babies died on the walk from New York City! The mothers miscarried but they kept on walking! This was amazing! This was supernatural!"

This was grounds for arrest. Or is that the male oppressor in me speaking?

Over on the other side of the crowd I heard somebody shouting through a bullhorn that he was from Alliance, Ohio. "And you may not believe this," he shouted, "but even in little Alliance, Ohio, we have 200 people in our shelter." I didn't believe this. I'm from Ohio. Alliance is a pleasant, semi-rural town in the northeastern part of the state. I've got relatives near there. On Monday I called the Alliance town office and was put right through to Mayor Carr who sounded puzzled. "The figure is new to me," he said. "I'd never heard the 200 figure. Our shelter was put up for people whose houses burn down, things like that. We haven't thought of it in terms of 'The Homeless.'"

Around noon the demonstrators traipsed down Constitution Avenue and came to a halt, standing dully before a large sound stage near the Capitol reflecting pool. It was a crowd numbering—as NBC News, with TV's keen eye for hard facts, put it—"between 40,000 and 250,000 people." The marchers packed themselves into the Mall from 3rd to 4th Streets (packed themselves very tightly, if we accept the 250,000 figure). They were then regaled by the moderately famous: Richie Havens, Martin Sheen, Dick Gregory, Olatunji, Mary Wilson, Governor Dick Celeste of Ohio. There was a fenced-off area beside the stage, a sort of celebrity pen, where additional fairly well-known people were being kept. Demonstrators pressed in to catch a glimpse of Casey Kasem, Susan Dey, Rita Coolidge, Jon Voight and to try to figure out which one of them was which.

She is also, like many women, under the impression that mankind is as rational and pragmatic as women are.

The crowd was addressed with much bruiting of homelessness numbers, 3 million being the favorite. Since this is 500 percent more than any serious estimate, housing advocates seem to have created 2,400,000 cases of homelessness virtually overnight. It just goes to show what the private sector can do.

A lot of quid pro quo was also in the air. "For the price of one B-2 bomber . . ." began most if not all the speeches. (As if there were a redemption center someplace where you could make a straight up trade of civil felicity for national defense.) Just try throwing an evicted crack addict at a Russian radar installation, is what I say. (Though, come to think of it, if the crack addict is wired-up and psychotic enough, it might work.)

And the Savings and Loan bailout seems to have replaced the moon shot as the Indignant Left's pet if/then social engineering theorem. "If the government can find $160 billion to . . ." But, of course, the government *couldn't* find $160 billion and ended up taking it from you and me.

The only break in the day's smug outrage and furious self-congratulation was a round of catcalls for Washington Mayor Marion Barry. I don't know why these people were mad at Barry. He advocates more federal money for housing and everything else. But Mayor Barry has been accused of taking drugs. I guess the homeless want those drugs back.

Coolly considered over lunch (a pheasant under glass and caviar sandwich with a six-pack of Dom Perignon, because I mean to spend this money before it all goes to build slums), the most prominent feature of the "Housing Now!" march was its beggary. The march organizers weren't even pretending that their proposed depredation of tax dollars would be "fair" or that the recipients of the largess would be "deserving." The "Housing Now!" message was simply and entirely "give me some money."

The Perennially Indignant Lefties have good reasons for not putting forth substantive programs. First, the homeless problem isn't what they say it is and they know it. "Homelessness" is not the result of a lack of warm, dry abodes in the United States. It's the result of mental patient deinstitutionalization, de facto legalization of drug use, elimination of intellectual standards in public education, destruction of urban neighborhoods through infringement on property rights, and a lot of other stuff that the Perennially Indignant themselves hold dear. People advocating programs to solve a problem caused by the programs those people advocated—this is as ridiculous as letting lawyers make laws.

Second, the Indignants don't want homelessness to go away (though I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and say they aren't conscious of this). In our prosperous, peaceful, and happy era, homelessness is one of the few undeniable (and telegenic!) social injustices left. No matter what somebody has done to himself or to others, he doesn't deserve to freeze in the gutter, is the Indignants' almost reasonable argument.

For the Perennially Indignant Left, homelessness is a fine rallying flag under which they can all gather and show off how much they care. Homelessness is also a splendid way to indict the American system and all Western civilization and its individualism and freedom. Of Thomas Paine's "natural and imprescriptible rights of man . . . liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression," the Indignants

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believe only in security. They would replace the democratic paradigm of the state as a free association of equals with the totalitarian paradigm of the state as a family. And the Indignants are Mom, of course, because they *care*.

Any policy-maker with more than a 30-watt bulb in his head laughs at the "Housing Now!" panhandler approach to the problems of the homeless. An intelligent policy-maker (we're not talking about Democrats here) is familiar with the homeless population figures generated by Dr. Martha Burt for the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture—the only nationwide probability-based study that's been done on the subject. He knows about Thomas J. Main's and Dr. E. Fuller Torrey's investigations of the psychiatric, economic, and behavior problems of the homeless. He's seen William Tucker's regression analysis on the relationship of unemployment, rent control, public housing, and other factors to housing shortages.

The facts are simple. A government house-building orgy won't work because one-third of the homeless are crazy and will jump out the windows and one-third are screwed up on drink and drugs and will sell the plumbing. The rest have primarily economic problems, but we can keep giving them free housing forever and it won't help. The law of supply and demand tells us that when the price of something is artificially set below market level there will soon be none of that thing left—as you may have noticed the last time you tried to buy something for nothing.

The only policy that would benefit the sane and worthwhile homeless would be one that lowered the real price of housing through expanded development, improved technology, increased prosperity—in other words, through progress.

But "progressives" don't like progress. Indignant Lefties don't care if a policy works. In some ways, it's better when a policy fails. Heck, what's a family for?

I went back to have another look at the demo, passing a number of homeless on the way. Despite a huge protest on their behalf just around the corner, they remained at their posts, cadging change. One fellow was sitting athwart the sidewalk on 12th Street near the Old Post Office building. He had an overnight bag with him and a pile of newspapers and magazines. He'd set out a paper cup primed with a few quarters and was listening to his Sony Walkman while he read the *Washington Post*. I went into a store to get my own copy of the *Post*. There was an Asian guy, about fifty, behind the counter. He spotted my press tags and said, in compassionate if barely comprehensible English, "Oh, is Saturday, beautiful day—you must work?"

I told him, yes, I was covering the housing march. "But you're working on Saturday, too," I said.

"Oh, yes!" he smiled widely. "Seven days!"

I hesitate to even mention these two encounters. You know how some events are too amazing for fiction? Well, the Asian and the sidewalk squatter were too real for journalism.

In certain ways, the "Housing Now!" march was a great success. Turnout was a heartening 40 percent of the organizers' advance estimates. Press coverage was slavering yet perfunctory. For instance, the march got thirty-three column inches in the next day's *Post*, but in the Section D Metro pages, not with the real news. The network broadcasts made sympathetic noises but mostly *en passant* on the way to the day's meatier stories.

It's hard to imagine anyone who had a close look at these demonstrators ever voting for a social program again. It was as though we, as a nation, had made the mistake of feeding the dog at the table. Now Spot won't leave us alone and is going to have to be tied out in the yard.

Mainstream politicians served the homeless with a lip or two but kept an arm's length between themselves and march honchos Mitch Snyder and Donna Brazile (you remember what a boost she gave to the Dukakis campaign).

Best of all, there were hardly any pretty girls at the rally. I ran into a journalist friend on the Mall and he and I pursued this line of inquiry as assiduously as our happy home lives allow. Virtually every female at the march was a bowser. "We're not being sexist here," my friend insisted. "It's not that looks matter, per se. It's just that pretty girls are always on the cutting edge of social trends. Remember how many pretty girls were in the anti-war movement twenty years ago? At the disco ten years ago? On Wall Street five years ago? Where the pretty girls are is where the country is headed," said my friend. "And this," he looked around him, "isn't it."

"By the way," I said, "where *are* the pretty girls?"

"Well, we know where two of them are," said my friend. "One lives with you and one lives with me, and they're *home*." □

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John R. Dunlap

KIDDIE LITTER

Children's books do a thriving business in the U.S.—
in titles more likely to prepare your kids for a dreary life in the New Age than for real life.

In 1745, at St. Paul's Churchyard against the north door of the cathedral, the Bible and Sun Bookshop for boys and girls was opened by a little man of bustling energy. Samuel Johnson called him Jack Whirler. A writer and publisher as well as bookshop proprietor, he had financed the growth of his book trade with years of travel selling haberdashery, cutlery, and patent medicines. He was portrayed by Oliver Goldsmith in *The Vicar of Wakefield* as "a red-faced, good-natured man, always in a hurry." He is enshrined today by various iconographers as "the father of children's books."

His name was John Newbery. Dr. Johnson probably stretched it when he confessed an uncertainty as to whether Newbery had read or written the most books, but Newbery's astonishingly active life inspired such exaggeration. He was a risk-taker too, the first publisher to produce books designed specifically for children. Before Newbery, there had been children's books of a sort, mostly ragged chapbooks of condensed fables which sold on London streets for a penny; and of course there was already a certain portion of adult literature which had been taken over by a growing class of literate children: Homer's *Odyssey*, Aesop's *Fables*, Malory's *Arthur*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and the like. But Newbery was on to something different with his notion that children deserved their own books. Taken with John Locke's theory that children should delight in their instruction, he spent the last two decades of his life bringing out more than forty titles for young people, each copy bound in gilt and flowered boards and selling for sixpence. Among the titles: *Jack Dandy's History of Birds and Beasts*, *Tom Thumb's Folio*, *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, and a modified English version of Perrault's 1697 collection *Contes de ma Mère l'Oie* which Newbery called, simply, *Mother Goose*.

That an Englishman should be responsible for such a development in book publishing is not altogether happenstance, according to the French historian Paul Hazard. In *Books, Children and Men* (1944), Hazard remarks at length on the "superiority of the North over the South" in the production of children's literature. Italy, Spain, and France tend to regard children as no more than small candidates for the career of adulthood; but among Anglo-Saxons, "childhood has the right to exist, and this gives them all through life the nostalgia of a lost paradise." The honored place accorded children by Anglo-Saxon culture transferred easily to America, where the Boston printer Isaiah Thomas pirated many of Newbery's books. Within a generation of Newbery's death in 1767, books for children were commonplace in Britain and America.

It wasn't much longer before the books had broken out of a mold which the literary historian Cornelia Meigs referred to as "the age of admonition"—a period typified by moral uplifters like Sarah Trimmer (1741-1802), who denounced *Robinson Crusoe* on the grounds that the story might lead boys "to an early taste for a rambling life and a desire for adventures." Such moralism exhausted itself during the nineteenth century and gave way to precisely the tastes bemoaned by Mrs. Trimmer; at the turn of the century, America's public libraries—once forbidden to children—were opening sections exclusively for young people and their books.

On both sides of the Atlantic, something else was happening as well—something like Washington Irving, Mark Twain, Howard Pyle, Louisa May Alcott, Lewis Carroll, Mary Mapes Dodge, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame, Rudyard Kipling. Children's literature was taking on literary respectability. In 1921, Frederic G. Melcher, a co-editor of *Publishers Weekly*, proposed to a meeting of the American Library Association (ALA) the idea of an annual award "for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." Melcher's John Newbery Medal, first awarded in 1922, was to become the oldest and most prestigious children's book award among dozens which would come and go in subsequent years. Another enduring brainchild of Melcher's was the annual Randolph Caldecott Medal, named after the nineteenth-century English illustrator and first awarded in 1938 for the year's best children's picture book.

Melcher's influence can also be credited with the decision by many publishing houses to open children's divisions, beginning with Macmillan in 1919. In America especially, the 1920s marked an unprecedented profusion of children's books continuing right up to this "Year of the Young Reader," as 1989 has been designated by the Library of Congress. Some idea of that profusion may be got from a change in the rules of the Newbery Committee. In 1932, a conference of the American Library Association passed a resolution declaring that no single author could take the Newbery Medal more than once without a (well-nigh impossible) unanimous vote of the Newbery Committee. The resolution was in keeping with the intent of the award—to encourage "original and creative work" among books for children. By 1958, however, the avalanche of creativity "in the children's field" had become oppressive enough to convince the committee reviewers that new talent no longer needed their encouragement. The ALA's Children's Services Division Board rescinded the rule of 1932, despite a risk that the Newbery Medal might become a spoils trinket reserved to a favored group of established authors. (In fact, only three medalists since 1958 have received the Newbery twice, and Beverly Cleary's 1984 Medal

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for the stultifying *Dear Mr. Henshaw* seems to have been the only Newbery so far motivated by a sentimental deference to a big name in the field; about half the Medals awarded since 1958 have gone to relatively new writers.)

In the past decade, children's book production has grown to an annual average of more than 3,000 titles. *Publishers Weekly* lists about 150 publishing houses and subsidiaries which altogether brought out roughly 1,500 new titles or new series in children's books just for the spring season of 1989. For 1989 alone, sales of children's books will top $1.5 billion (up from $500 million in 1983); *Book Industry Trends* projects sales of $2 billion by the end of 1992.

The reason for the profusion and the profits needn't be complicated by theories about Anglo-American fixations on youth. By the 1920s the bright thought had dawned on publishers that most people do most of their life's reading during childhood. In a somewhat precarious business, then, the publisher of chancy books for adults can hedge against losses by supplying a generous stock of children's books. Although actual divisional profits are kept secret, publishers who will discuss the matter admit that their children's divisions are the most lucrative. There are, to be sure, greater costs incurred by elaborate design work and by color printing (and cited by some publishers to justify low advances), but children's books entail far less risk because of their larger potential market and their greater longevity as backlist sellers. This relative marketability helps explain those circulars at your local supermarket which advertise mail-order courses for budding writers of children's books—or, in the credit lines of freelance book reviewers, the frequency of such remarks as "writes books for children" or "is currently at work on a book of poems for children."

Let us not belabor the consequences of all this prolixity. Fifteen minutes in the children's section of a well-stocked bookstore should be enough to persuade any browser with moderate cultivation (or any parent with ordinary horse sense) that no small portion of kiddie lit these days—from the phonic emptiness of Dr. Seuss to the cutesy nostrums of the Berenstain Bears to the kinky enticements of the teen romances—is unadulterated schlock. But what of the "good" children's books—the ones that come wrapped in critical acclaim, literary awards, and professional recommendations? The record over the past three decades has been erratic and very strange.

Of course, the times too have been erratic and strange. Among the immutable clichés in the large body of commentary on children's literature, none pops up more often than the remark that children's books reflect the times. A runner-up is the attendant cliché that children's literature has outgrown a "didacticism" whereby any material for children had to be attached to a moral lesson. In her survey of the late nineteenth century, Anne Thaxter Eaton, noting the emergence of Mary Mapes Dodge's *St. Nicholas* children's magazine (1873), ballyhoos the event in hosannas that burst out of an otherwise deadpan objectivity: "With the advent of *St. Nicholas* didacticism as the chief element in reading for children fled away forever."

Forever? Well, the Sarah Trimmers and the Puritan hornbooks had departed the children's literary scene, probably forever; but the first Newbery Medal was awarded in 1922 to a Dutch immigrant named Hendrik Willem van Loon for his *Story of Mankind*, a child's survey of world history intended by Van Loon to promote international understanding. In 1944, near the climax of World War II and therefore under somewhat less understanding international circumstances, Esther Forbes accepted the Newbery Medal for *Johnny Tremain*, a rousing piece of historical fiction which she wrote to inspire patriotism in American boys approaching draft age. By 1954, though, the trend was back to understanding (with early stirrings of New Age self-absorption), when Joseph Krumgold took the Newbery for *And Now Miguel*, a rather moody first-person narrative about a 12-year-old boy caught between different cultures.

A second Newbery Medal went to the same author in 1960 for *Onion John*, another first-person narrative wherein, roughly speaking, a stubborn father learns to respect the whims of his son. *Onion John* was judged by the critic Carolyn Horovitz to be hardly a children's book at all, but "a teaching story, a parable, aimed at parents." My oldest son, the 12-year-old critic and research assistant David Dunlap, has firmly declined (despite my orders) to read *Onion John*, having judged *And Now Miguel* to be "boring and kinda preachy."

Boring and kind of preachy. But not didactic, mind you. One may perhaps take it to be a sign of the times that most contemporary professionals in the "field" of children's literature exhibit a secular cast of mind in which "didacticism" is strictly a code word for religious admonition, which is strictly taboo. Other forms of admonition are . . . what? What are we to call them?

In an essay on "Magic, Craft, and the Making of Children's Books" (1973), Nancy Willard gives a useful answer by drawing a distinction between fantasies and "problem books":

> A problem book is first cousin to those jokes that the traveling patent medicine man would tell when he wanted to collect a good crowd. He'd start out telling you a good story and end up trying to sell you something. And once you saw the ulterior motive, you felt cheated. The problem is a sort of Procrustean bed and the story is cut to fit it.

The honored place accorded children by Anglo-Saxon culture transferred easily to America, where the Boston printer Isaiah Thomas pirated many of John Newbery's books.

The fantasy, on the other hand, is written not to instruct you or to enlarge your understanding, but to keep you sitting on the edge of your chair. It is merely incidental that throughout Grimm's fairy tales, for example, "you won't find a better collection of stories about murder, poverty, child abuse, and abandonment." The problem book, absorbed with such troubles and with the consequent emotional distress, evinces a crimped imagination which sees the "real world" as an impoverished little place circumscribed by news copy and psychology texts. To the truly good storyteller, however, the only "problems" are "narrative ones." The best stories "are like rivers, which cut their own channels," and the greatest fantasies "come from a fullness of knowledge of human nature, of science, of history, of life."

Now among thirty-eight books to receive Newbery Medals from 1922 until 1959, only two are "problem books" of the sort defined by Willard; only in Krumgold's *And Now Miguel* and to a lesser degree in Virginia Sorensen's *Miracles on Maple Hill* (1957 Newbery) do the authors seem occupied more by the message than by the story. But among thirty books honored by the Newbery Medal since 1960, at least eighteen have been problem books—a number that does not include borderline stuff like Sid Fleischman's *Whipping Boy* (1987 Newbery) or E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1968). Nancy Willard's *Visit to William Blake's Inn*, which took the Newbery in 1982, meets her own high standards of fantasy; so do Madeleine L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time* (1963 Newbery), Lloyd Alexander's *High King* (1969), and Susan Cooper's *Grey King* (1976). But Robert O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (1972) is a fantasy already dated by its undercurrent of environmentalist insistence, and the wooden characters in Robin McKinley's *Hero and the Crown* (1985) are little more than backdrop for a feminist yawp. If we include these two fractured fantasies, we really have twenty problem books out of thirty honored since 1960 by the most prestigious children's book award.

Nor is thematic content the only business at issue here. In the eight years from 1970 to 1977, half the Newbery Medals (as might be expected) went to books that deal with the "black experience" in America, a theme rippling with problem-book potential. But William Armstrong's *Sounder* (1970) and Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1977) are both fine stories, told with spirit and narrative authority. The problem books among the four are Virginia Hamilton's *M. C. Higgins the Great* (1975 Newbery—it also took the *Boston Globe*-Horn Book Award and the National Book Award, all of which should give future cultural historians something to ponder about the state of mind of the American verbal class in 1975), in which an episodic plot is dominated by a heavy-handed symbolism, and Paula Fox's *Slave Dancer* (1974), in which the predicament of a 13-year-old boy (a New Orleans street musician shanghaied onto a slave ship in 1840—it could have been a good story!) is overshadowed by a tedious psychologizing delivered in (what else?) a brooding first-person narrative.

The keynote in problem books, regardless of theme, seems to be a preoccupation with the self, so that feelings per se wind up taking center stage rather than modestly serving the storyline. One may be tempted at this point to speculate, unkindly, about the evolution of children's literature as an outlet for writers troubled by personal disorders, but it's enough to point out that the "field" of children's books is disproportionately populated by maiden aunts and bluestockings. Taking the Newbery Medal for *Up a Road Slowly* in 1967, Irene Hunt may have let the cat out when, in her acceptance speech, she referred passingly to children's literature as "a substitute for our ineffective sermons." Needless to say, *Up a Road Slowly* is quintessentially a problem book, about a "questing, sen-

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sitive child" who acquires "values" in "the learning process" of her "growth," and like that.

A broader sampling of the "problems" in such books is available in what has become, since 1976, a standard reference work, "a reference classic" according to a credit notice on its own dustcover: Denise Wilms and Ilene Cooper's *Guide to Non-sexist Children's Books*. Volume II offers an annotated list of 685 approved books published between 1976 and 1985. Some of the descriptions are rather obscure, as in this blurb on *The Practical Princess* by Jay Williams: "Six fairy tales, in which the heroes and heroines do not behave like stereotypes." Other descriptions are more direct, like the entry on Vivian Sheldon Epstein's *History of Women for Children*:

This social and cultural history of women from the beginnings of civilization emphasizes the difficulties encountered by women when men began to look upon them as property.

But not all entries are so grim. For kids in the seventh through twelfth grades, there is comic relief in M. E. Kerr's *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*:

Dinky Hocker is unhappy but cannot get her parents' attention—they're too busy doing social work with drug addicts. A lively comedy with a serious underlying message.

For the same age group, there is also straight talk about developments and relationships, or something, as in Norma Fox Mazer's *Up in Seth's Room*:

Fifteen-year-old Finn Rousseau has decided to remain a virgin although her friends and her older sister do not accept her attitude for themselves. When Finn meets Seth, however, a relationship develops that causes both of them to reevaluate their attitudes toward sex.

In addition to reevaluating attitudes, there is opportunity for fifth- through eighth-graders to sort out emotions by reading, for instance, Gary Barger's *What Happened to Mr. Forster*:

Louis Lamb's confidence is bolstered because of the kindly supportiveness of his teacher, Mr. Forster. When Forster is fired for being a homosexual, Louis is naturally upset and must sort through a range of emotions.

And of course there are nature stories, a staple of good children's literature. Rivaling Jack London is Whitley Streiber with the gripping *Wolf of Shadows*:

A girl and her mother, an ethologist studying wolves in a remote wilderness area, survive a nuclear attack. As nuclear winter sets in, the two bond with the wolf pack for mutual support and make their way south to a warmer climate where chances are better for continued survival.

The list even includes fantasies—albeit, to be sure, fantasies of a sort disciplined by a realistic problem. Recommended for fifth- and sixth-graders is Astrid Lindgren's *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*:

This engaging fantasy tells about Ronia, a robber chieftain's independent daughter, whose affection for the son of a rival chieftain brings drastic changes in both their lives.

A third volume of the *Guide to Non-sexist Children's Books* is promised for 1990.

For 1989 alone, sales of children's books will top $1.5 billion (up from $500 million in 1983).

That volume will almost certainly approve Marion Dane Bauer's *On My Honor*, a 1987 Newbery Honor Book (runner-up to the medalist) which may serve as an exemplar of the problem genre. The problem in this inadvertently chilling story is the "inner struggle" suffered by 12-year-old Joel after his best friend, Tony, drowns while the two are swimming in a forbidden river.

Bauer specializes in books relating psychological turmoil in youngsters, and the bulk of *On My Honor* dwells on Joel's convoluted indecision about whether to tell the truth about the fatal escapade to his and Tony's parents. Lost in this lugubrious preoccupation—rendered in a stiff, idiotized prose ("The racking sobs flowed out of him like water")—is the sheer horror of a child losing his life.

Recall by contrast Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, a familiar story and perhaps the best child's adventure tale ever written. Of several conflicts in the story, one is the ambivalence young Jim Hawkins comes to feel about Long John Silver. Silver is a rogue, a cheat, a liar—but there is a warmth about him to which Jim is first attracted before being repelled by Silver's treachery, and then drawn back by Silver's apparent kindness. But we never know exactly what to make of Long John, and neither does Jim—and it doesn't matter much because ambivalent feelings are just a few strokes on life's huge canvas, and *Treasure Island* is busy with the whole canvas. Stevenson's effortless proportion and moral balance are totally absent in books like Bauer's *On My Honor*, wherein the worst tragedy is buried while the most petty moral indecision is blown up to heroic stature. Unsympathetic and devoid of humor, such books violate what the late Elizabeth Nesbitt called the "rightful heritage of children"—their brief interlude of escape from immediate confusions and from the peculiar twists that a given era imposes on perennial human troubles.

Stevenson himself, at about the time he was working on *Treasure Island* (1882), wrote an essay which he called "A Gossip on Romance." A good story, by his reckoning, "should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves." Most contemporary books for children do not have such power. The least harmful among them are diversions bearing the outlines of ragged templates cut according to safe, secular formulas. The worst of the lot—books like Bauer's psychological melodramas and such angry, obsessive Newbery award-winners as Krumgold's *Onion John*, Paula Fox's *Slave Dancer*, Cynthia Voigt's *Dicey's Song*—turn Stevenson's dictum right on its head, so that sensitive young readers are likely to be rapt clean into themselves on a solipsistic binge. "We owe our students powerful reading experiences, which include them in a vital way," writes an incoherent teacher in praise of Bauer's *On My Honor* and other "realistic" children's books.

But the violence done by these "vital" books may be far more serious than the physical violence usually disapproved of by their enthusiasts. If, for example, divorce is really something of a crippling disaster and not a "problem" which enlightened kids can easily adjust to; if homosexuality is a pathetic disorder and not a "life style" impugned by craven moralists; if teen promiscuity is not a sensible "option" for healthy youngsters; if America is not really just a congeries of bigots and victims; if sentimental naturalism is not a very natural human pose; if militant feminism is not a serious response to life's deepest yearnings; if moral choice is not exclusively a "private matter"; if ethical relativism is not coherently admissible as life's only absolute—well, then, a lot of contemporary books for children are telling a lot of big fibs to our kids.

And a lot of kids are buying into the fibs. Using the (trend-setting) Newbery award-winners as a yardstick, we can say that something like two-thirds of those 3,000 children's titles being cranked out each year are not books that a sensible parent would be eager to see in his child's hands. In a recent editorial for the *Horn Book Magazine* (the most influential of the trade publications dealing with children's literature), Anita Silvey complains bitterly about the current crop of children's books—not because of the pervasive New Age proselytizing, to which she appears oblivious, but because of the physical violence she sees pouring out of the books, and not just the mediocre ones; "violence is also pervading the work of our best and our brightest creators." We can't do much about it, she says, because children's books merely "reflect the times." We should, however, be alert that "the serpent has invaded the garden."

Yes—we should, one may suppose. But we should know too that the serpent has been lurking there, doing violence, for quite a bit longer than Ms. Silvey seems to be aware. If the parents, teachers, and librarians who shell out in support of America's $2 billion kiddie lit industry would just keep their eyes and ears open, they could easily spot the serpent among the flowers by his mode of expression. He's boring and kind of preachy. □

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Thomas Mallon

THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR

A resident of New York City's Turtle Bay crosses the street and discovers the perverse lost world of the United Nations.

It's 11:05 a.m. on September 25 and here at 321 East 45th Street we are under our benign annual house arrest. In fifteen minutes President Bush will arrive at the United Nations, which is 100 or so yards away. About a dozen people are in the apartment-house lobby waiting for him to get safely up First Avenue and into the General Assembly Building, so they can get permission to leave their own building from one of the many policemen stationed on the block. On one of Ronald Reagan's visits, we had the Highway Patrol in the lobby.

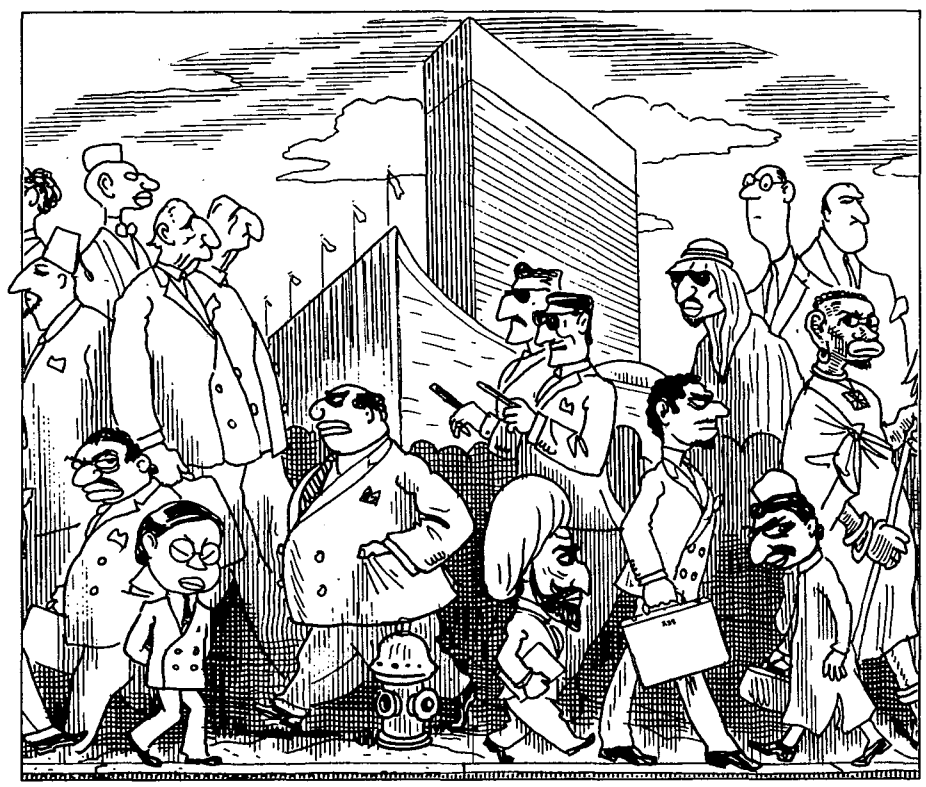
Even when the President isn't making his yearly visit, this stretch of East 45th Street is one of the safest blocks in the city. The U.S. Mission to the U.N. is on the corner, and a New York City policeman occupies a kiosk outside it twenty-four hours a day. When the co-op board of 321 held its annual meeting two summers ago and considered spending money for another doorman's shift—the last one now ends at midnight—one woman argued that she hardly saw the need: the man with the Uzi near the back of the mission made her feel very safe.

It is highly unusual for the residents and property-owners of Manhattan Island to argue against additional security for themselves. But this little East River neighborhood is different: if the U.N. has failed in its aim to make the world safe, it can at least be credited with having done that for Turtle Bay. A block up from the U.S. Mission is the Turkish Center, which makes for another cop in another kiosk, presumably to discourage Armenians or Greeks bearing plastique. (The car-bomb barriers around the U.S. Mission are disguised as appealing oval-shaped planters.) But no one worries much about terrorism here; the residents are quite happy to risk the odd international outrage in exchange for all the extra deterrence to street crime. In fact I live on the first floor of 321, without bars on the windows, either.

As I sit at my desk on weekday afternoons, multilingual children's chatter drifts across the street from the International Pre-Schools. I get lunch from the U.N. Plaza Delicatessen, have clothes mended at the U.N. Cleaners, and get my hair cut at the U.N. Hair Cutters. The automatic teller at the nearest bank displays its functions in French. The neighborhood is a gentle mix of brick apartment buildings, old townhouses (a recent for-sale sign offered one ideal for a family "or small mission"), and the sort of tall green-glassed international-style structures that the U.N. brought in its postwar wake. The sloped General Assembly Building and the 39-story Secretariat tower have stood for almost forty years on the site of some old slaughterhouses, a fact which some internationalists probably took to be hopefully metaphorical.

It gets quiet here early. Workers at the United Nations are not known for burning the midnight oil; indeed, I often catch a bus up First Avenue at about 8:00 p.m.—hardly a late hour for people to be knocking off a day of world-salvational labor—and I am usually the only person at one of the stops closest to "the Organization," as its employees often call it. (It occurs to me that the racehorse Secretariat may have gotten his name because he always finished early.) While waiting for my bus, I ponder the quiet, enjoy the sea breezes (the East River is actually a body of salt water), and regard the glassy nighttime facades of the buildings that seem both monumental and ephemeral, like empty pavilions at a deserted world's fair.

When I moved here four years ago I hoped to be able to run in the good-sized park north of the General Assembly Building, but the U.N. only permits strolling there. The slower pace unfortunately enforces a more lingering look at the sculptures donated by various member states. From Finland there is an uninspiring configuration of rotted-out piping, and from the Soviet Union a heroically pumped-up bronze man performing the suspiciously Biblical beating of a sword into a plowshare. In 1975 the East Germans presented "The Rising Man," who appears more cringing and tormented than anything else. Most popular of all with tourists, who are always photographing themselves beside it, is a 1988 gift from Luxembourg by Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd —a great big handgun that's twisted into an ineffectual knot atop its pedestal. Its sixties Pop Art look seems more progressive than nostalgic here, because the rest of the U.N. is eternally cloaked in the atmosphere of the fifties, from its architectural style to the blond woods of its elevators and desks and the great splashy non-representational paintings and tapestries.



WELCOME TO THE UNITED NATIONS! IT'S YOUR WORLD! says the sign for a wall of smiling Kodacolored faces of many lands and races. The U.N.'s tour begins with an explanation of the Organization's origins and the information that "the land of the U.N.," even though it was purchased with John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s money, "is not part of the USA." The Host Country is always a touchy subject, and while the tour starts by adhering to a bland moral equivalence—going past a blown-up photo of Reagan and Gorbachev shaking hands, and a kind of ballistic product map ("Nuclear Threat: Ominous Ration of Warheads to People")—one quickly gets a sense of Who's Really To Blame. There are no fewer than six cases of artifacts—broken crockery, etc.—from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as, from the latter, a radiated statue of St. Agnes and her lamb. The front is undamaged because, less than two thou-

Thomas Mallon's new book is Stolen Words: Forays Into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism *(Ticknor & Fields).*

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sand feet from ground zero, it fell face forward at the moment of the blast; the back is charred and mottled. Before moving on from this unsettling display, the guide draws attention to the garden beyond the window. It contains the Peace Bell, a gift to the U.N. in 1954—from Japan.

The "partial international character to the territory," explains another guide, is illustrated by the occasional vexing situation like the American denial of a visa to Yasir Arafat, who wished to address the General Assembly. Whatever American legal rights might have been in this matter, she says, it was really not in keeping with the spirit of the U.N.-U.S. arrangement. When asked if there have been problems like this with anyone else, she comes up with one example—that of Kurt Waldheim, whose picture is still available on postcards in the U.N. Bookshop.

The sloped General Assembly Building and the 39-story Secretariat tower have stood for almost forty years on the site of some old slaughterhouses, a fact which some internationalists probably took to be hopefully metaphorical.

The day I began attending U.N. press briefings as an accredited correspondent was July 31, when word came that Lt. Col. William Higgins, the American hostage who was serving with U.N. forces in Lebanon, had been killed in retaliation for the Israelis' kidnapping of Sheik Obeid. Between fifty and seventy-five reporters listened to a spokesman for Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the SG (as the Secretary-General is called with a kind of affectionate diminution), say that his boss "strongly hopes" Higgins is alive. But hope was followed by contingency mourning: "If the report can, however, be confirmed, the Secretary-General can only express his outrage and revulsion . . ."

Just back from Geneva, the SG would be having lunch with the Yugoslavian ambassador, and would be getting an award as "personality of the year" from some group or other—a piece of news that made two women reporters near me look at each other and laugh. The briefing is a kind of hour-by-hour diary of the SG's activities along with reports of twitching by some of the Organization's many acronymic tentacles: there's been an UNTAG report from Windhoek, and a discussion of UNIFIL by the Security Council.

One quickly realizes that assignment to the U.N. is the media equivalent of being sent to the glue factory. None of the several dozen reporters was recognizable, except for Jeanne Moos of CNN, who seemed to be doing temporary duty here instead of her usual featurettes on such subjects as folding umbrellas and a New York woman's collection of pet rats. After the briefing I count thirty-four typewriters—manual Underwoods—in the press room. Only one is being used, by an Indian-looking gentleman. A woman covering the Security Council, which met this morning on the subject of hostage-taking, is on the telephone explaining to someone why she'll be unavailable to do something: "I'm sorry. This is the first thing that's happened in months." The U.N.'s slow season, when the General Assembly is not in session, generally lasts eight months, from January through August.

Still, the press room contains, in mid-summer, rack after gun-metal-gray rack of press releases from the U.N.'s Department of Public Information (DPI) and various individual missions. Correspondents walk along the racks each day and pick up sheet after sheet, automatically, like secretaries sleepwalking past an immense collating copy machine. "New Permanent Representative of Afghanistan Presents Credentials"—so this goes into the pile. The most important daily document is the *Journal of the United Nations* (*Journal des Nations Unies*), which announces meetings held, meetings scheduled, and which contains, in its equivalent of baseball box scores, a section titled "Signatures, Ratifications, Etc." There is good news on August 18: the "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (and Protocols), concluded at Geneva on 10 October 1980" has now been ratified by—Liechtenstein.

As Jennifer Metzger points out in a paper for a recent conference on "Media and the U.N.": "Whereas most major newspapers, magazines and broadcast outlets once maintained full-time staff correspondents at the world body, today only the *New York Times* does so." But the press facilities themselves, like the rest of the U.N., retain their lost-in-the-fifties look. The press releases all have a mimeographed appearance; the words on them are snowy and pulverized.

The language of the U.N.'s Department of Public Information is a kind of sweetened Newspeak, a diction so abstract it soothes grammar to sleep. The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons began in 1983, and correspondents are reminded that "The main goals of the World Programme of Action are prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of the opportunities for disabled persons." Does the World Programme really seek to prevent opportunities for the handicapped? Actually, meaning hardly matters if utterance is viewed as a noble end in itself. In her 1973 study of the U.N., *Defeat of an Ideal*, the writer Shirley Hazzard, who worked there for years, said that " 'productivity' is more often than not assessed in wordage," and that much U.N. documentation is "useless in two or three languages."

It is of course the nature of bureaucracies to seek the stasis of perpetual motion, to keep themselves going in order to keep going, but it is the United Nations that sets global standards for circularity. A press release issued this August 3, concerning the meetings in Geneva of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, notes the following: "During the session, which will last until 4 August, the Group is expected to review developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations and to give special attention to the evolution of standards concerning those rights." Carts precede horses in an endless parade of deferral. The SG's office on his receipt of the latest Central American peace proposal: "While awaiting reception of an official version of the document, the advanced text which he has seen is being studied in a preliminary fashion . . ."

In terms of reflecting the Organization itself, the DPI's rhetoric must be judged wholly appropriate, for it is the department's duty to relay, with zomboid impartiality, both the meaningless—the King of Morocco has told the Conference on Disarmament of the "great responsibility to prevent the annihilation of humankind"—and the mendacious: "Cuba had no political prisoners," said the Cuban representative to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. "Prisoners were sentenced under the penal code and not for their political opinions. There were, however, counter-revolutionary prisoners who were involved in various subversive activities against the State."

On September 12 the Secretary-General issued an advance version of his annual report, noting in the course of his *tour d'horizon* (a cherished U.N. term) that "Natural disasters are too frequently a cause of human loss, economic and social hardship." It was sometime later that month, during the week of Hurricane Hugo, in fact, that I began throwing away some of the United Nations documents that, after two months of my frequenting the press room, were beginning to overrun my apartment.

"Where's Apartheid?" asks a man behind the information desk of his colleague.

"Trusteeship," answers the colleague, so I now know where to go for the 630th meeting of the Special Committee Against Apartheid.

The Trusteeship Council Chamber is one of the U.N.'s many vast auditoria and conference rooms, and today, August 8, the gallery is nearly empty. Only a few reporters seem present, though some tourists wander in and out. I follow the tinny whisper of the translated proceedings through headphones attached below the armrests of the chairs. The acting chairman, Jai Pratap Rana of Nepal, who looks like a Central Asian Sam Nunn, listens as Ann-Marie Lizin, the secretary of state for Europe 1992 and a former member of the European Parliament, says that the "frontline" states in southern Africa have only known war and oppression and that "the search for genuine peace in the region" can only be fulfilled through the elimination of apartheid. She says that for three years colloquia have been held in Brussels on this topic, though "nothing has really changed." What is needed is "a refocusing of attention." Indeed, "what we need to do is attack the problem at its root." That it is impossible to keep attention focused on any topic if you meet to discuss it 630 times is not an insight that would be speakable here.

The chairman acknowledges Miss Lizin's speech with senatorial courtesies ("I thank her Excellency . . . for her important statement"). The journalist who follows her, Miranda Ebenezer, a member of the African Women's Organization of Azania and of the Media Workers Association, then addresses Mr. Jai Pratap Rana as "Comrade Chairperson," before approvingly quoting Kwame Nkrumah and discussing the establishment of the African National Congress in 1912. She declares that "the settler regime" has "no rights"; that there "is no room for the imperialist, the colonizer, the capitalist"; and that in the struggle against apartheid, "African women have courageously taken the bull by the horns."

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The woman sitting next to me has closed her eyes. Some people on the delegates' floor not far from the place marked for Djibouti are talking loudly. The chairman thanks Miss Ebenezer "for her informative and important statement."

Three days later, the Security Council meets at the request of Panama to discuss alleged U.S. violations of the Panama Canal treaty. The gallery is perhaps one-sixth full; the green metal chairbacks are chipped, and the first couple of earphones I try are broken. Pérez de Cuéllar, who has the appearance of a well-meaning high school teacher too shy to confess his yearnings for retirement, sits next to the council's temporary president, Hocine Djoudi, from Algeria.

"Your country and mine have continued to enjoy cordial, productive relations," the red-headed deputy U.S. representative, Herbert Okun, says to the Algerian, before responding to the declaration by Jorge Ritter, Noriega's foreign minister, that "The United States is running out of excuses, and the Panamanian people is running out of patience."

Mr. Okun is a calm droner, no Moynihan or Kirkpatrick. He points out that it is General Noriega who has violated the treaties, on 900 occasions, and that this meeting has been called to distract attention from the OAS's efforts to get him to surrender power.

Like the Panamanian people, I am soon running out of patience, and it occurs to me that one reason Pérez de Cuéllar reminds me of my old science teachers is that attending meetings at the U.N. has turned me back into something I haven't been since high school: a clock-watcher. I retreat from the gallery to the press room, where a TV monitor shows the videotape the Panamanians have provided as evidence of the U.S. violations. It contains shots of a helicopter, a police car, a couple of little boats, a tank—all of them meaninglessly spliced together. The monitor now scans the representatives watching the video in the chamber. Two Chinese are laughing to each other. Even Perez de Cuellar and the Algerian president can be seen smiling. But Mr. Jorge Ritter insists that these are "real" pictures, not done in a movie studio; furthermore, "there's a great deal more of this film." Jeanne Moos of CNN, sitting in front of the monitor with someone who asks her what she thinks the helicopter on the screen is supposed to signify, responds: "This must be the 'menacing maneuvers.' " In his only Moynihanian moment, Herbert Okun says that you can see worse on the streets of New York every day.

One comes to realize that such talk isn't meaningless or amusing, but that it is simply evil.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People holds its 164th meeting in the chamber of the Economic and Social Council on August 15, which means that it is 466 meetings behind the apartheid committee in grappling with its assigned enormities. A guide in the gallery tells tourists that the exposed beams and workings of this room (a la Beaubourg) were deliberately left as they are so that the room's unfinished look would serve "as a symbol" of all the work that the Economic and Social Council still has to do. The tours come in and out as the meeting assembles itself, but even though it's an "open" one, not a single member of the public has come to sit and watch it. It reminds me of a bad poetry reading at a college; perhaps they're delaying the start in the hope that people will show up. I look down from the gallery and see the goateed permanent observer of Palestine, Zuhdi Labib Terzi, whom I recognize from the neighborhood and from "Nightline." The Cuban representative sits next to the one from Afghanistan. (Do they chat about the Soviets the way housewives talk about boorish husbands?)

The delay has actually been caused by the late arrival of Ronald Spiers, a U.S. diplomat for many years and now a U.N. under-secretary. He finally shows up, with a small entourage and a manila folder. Between the usual courtesies and his inexplicable reference to recent positive developments in the Middle East, he says his experience tells him that "externally derived" solutions for Palestine won't work—although things can be helped "by a fair wind from the international community."

That wind really begins to blow when the committee praises the work of the United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, which was held in June. NGOs are "non-governmental organizations" that affiliate themselves with the U.N. in order to achieve solutions to such pressing problems as this one. Among the North American NGOs participating in this particular symposium were the National Lawyers' Guild, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, American Jewish Alternatives to Zionism, and the Committee for Academic Freedom in the Israeli Occupied Territories. Yasir Arafat sent his regards. He was "delighted" they were meeting, as well he might have been, since the symposium's Resolution 2 was a rather witty series of calls for the United States to reduce its aid to Israel: First, by "an amount equal to the sum expended by Israel in maintaining its belligerent occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem"; second, "by an amount equal to the sum expended by Israel for settlement maintenance and expansion in the occupied territory"—and so on.

In this committee, as with the Special Committee on Decolonization, one quickly sees that the purpose is not the exchange and mediation of opinion, but its creation and manipulation—spreading the message, getting North Americans and Western Europeans to see it the U.N.'s way. It is announced that a Latin American and Caribbean Regional Seminar and NGO Symposium is going to be held in Buenos Aires, and an Asian version will take place in Malaysia later this year. Terzi thanks the government of Malaysia.

The next item on the agenda? Applications from new NGOs to participate in the committee's work. "More and more organizations," says the chairwoman, are applying to participate in symposia sponsored by the committee. "All these NGOs have been screened . . . and the Bureau recommends them for approval." There's another symposium in Vienna in August. She's also accepted an invitation to represent the committee at the Non-Aligned Summit in Belgrade in September. And she's "accepted in principle" an invitation for a representative of the committee to go to the Presidium of the Soviet Committee of Solidarity with African and Asian Countries in 1990.

Actually, the real purpose of these meetings is not so much the manipulation of opinion as the assurance of other meetings, just as the real purpose of U.N. reports is that they be written. Ambassador Terzi praises one on the violation of human rights in the occupied territories, saying that it is "worthy of becoming a document" within the committee's larger report.

The United Nations is so involved with death—that is, of the intellectual and moral variety—that with the word "séance," which the U.N. uses as its synonym for "meeting," French seems less like the language of diplomacy than of bluntness. If the U.N. had a school song, it wouldn't be "Kumbaya" or "It's A Small World After All"; it would be "We're Here Because We're Here Because We're Here." On August 24, in order to review the 1979 Vienna Programme of Action, the 97th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development took place in Conference Room 4, which is in fact a vast hall. The participants were scattered like distantly planted shrubs to listen to the Hungarian representative say that "what is essential is for the Intergovernmental Committee never to tire of examining the influence of science and technology on development"; that "programs of a comprehensive nature" must be developed; that these programs be "monitored" and "coordinated"; and that, in conclusion, "the various programs must be interrelated." We must, in short, "do something; not leave it in the merely theoretical realm," even though "there is no such thing as instant success and easy solutions."[1] Three weeks later, at a conference of NGOs on the relationship between environment and development, held in this same room, Robert Savio, director-general of Inter-Press Service Third World News Agency, would speak to a large audience on the difference between information and communication. Information is a vertical structure; communication is not. He would also consider whether environment "is an event or a process."

After some weeks of listening to it, one comes to realize that such talk isn't meaningless or amusing, but that it is simply evil. The denial of reality it in-

[1]Mr. Alistair Harrison of the United Kingdom had the day before put a little Thatcherite oomph into the proceedings, declaring, as the subsequent U.N. press release put it, that "the Committee had been founded on the myth that problems could be solved simply by declaring a programme of action and preceding it with the name of a well-known city. The vacuousness of such an approach was all too evident ten years later." His statement should have been nothing more than agreeably self-evident, but for the United Nations it bordered on the electrifying.

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volves is so total that it has led to a kind of final irony for the United Nations—namely, that it has become a world unto itself, a small clean space colony of frozen bodies sent up to escape a dying planet. Unable to remake the real world, the inhabitants of the U.N. have seceded into a toy one.

Here in Turtle Bay the corner of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza at East 47th St. has for months now been occupied by Chinese students and rechristened Tiananmen Square. In their very polite way, they ask residents of the neighborhood who are running errands along First Avenue to sign their petitions. (Their two portable toilets are gently labeled "S-T" and "P-E.") Along with the petitions there have been videos of the massacres, as well as signs saying "Hang Li Peng!" and—a borrowing from the left—"PEOPLE UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED."

On seven successive Saturdays this summer there were services to honor the dead students of Peking. At a Buddhist ceremony late in July, New York politicians like Rep. Bill Green and the ghastly Ronald Lauder bellied up to a small altar hung with black crepe and set out with flowers and fruit. Passing out black armbands and incense sticks, the demonstrators were organized, neat, and smiling—enough to make one think that if American students had behaved this way twenty years ago, their parents would have stopped the Vietnam war just because they were so pleased with their children's manners. A Japanese tourist bus passed as a Buddhist monk in a saffron robe got ready for the ceremony, which included chanting and the beating of a small hand drum. A man not wishing to be photographed, wearing a white plastic bag over his head (with a have-a-nice-day smiley face printed upside-down on the back), was led by a woman to the altar to pay his respects. Speeches followed the ceremony, one of them urging Americans to stop doing business with China until the executions stop. With the kind of realism one almost never hears uttered across the street, one speaker reminded potential boycotters that "In the long run you will have the support of one billion Chinese consumers. . . ."

"Tiananmen Square" has had a distinctly anti-U.N. flavor: "U.N. WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE WORLD? SHAME ON U.N.," read one sign. There is no mention of the Chinese situation in the Secretary-General's annual report, and it is not at all certain it will get on any important U.N. agenda. That it has managed to come up at a meeting of the Subcommittee on Human Rights in Geneva—a fact recently pointed out by U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering in a generally encouraged assessment of the U.N.—is hardly inspiring.

The United Nations concerns itself with only a handful of available evils, chief among them apartheid. A press release of August 9 shows Iceland seeking a clean bill of health from the Racial Discrimination Committee by stating it has no diplomatic relations with South Africa. When the Special Committee Against Apartheid deplores a planned trip to South Africa by some British cricketers it makes the "Friday Highlights" sheet from the DPI. The General Assembly is largely made up of dictatorships, but what one cannot do in the U.N. is speak in relative terms. Only a pariah like Israel does that. Without relative thinking there can be no debate, and finally no morality—just a succession of madly absolute statements. But what the United Nations will not do is admit the existence of our vicious world of pots and kettles. Indonesia talks of the South African "reign of terror" in Namibia, but it would be impertinent to mention Indonesia's own domestic slaughters of the 1960s. What happens is that the genuine evil of apartheid ends up tamed by its own enshrinement. Czechoslovakia worries to the Decolonization Committee that "information on the options available to the peoples of small territories [is] not being provided nor [are] all administering Powers promoting the economic development of their territories in preparation for independence." One wonders: Would he like those same materials more widely distributed in, say, Czechoslovakia, in case it is ever decolonized by the Soviet Union and given a chance for economic development? But it would be rude to ask.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People holds its 164th meeting on August 15, which means that it is 466 meetings behind the apartheid committee in grappling with its assigned enormities.

The General Assembly's huge hall is ringed with vertical beams resembling the pipes of a huge organ. The last meeting of the 43rd session takes place on Monday, September 18, and is a bit of a parliamentary fiction. Insofar as anything at the U.N. is real, the GA had its last real meeting in July, after convening on fewer than a dozen days since the previous December. But now, one day before the 44th session opens, the 43rd must close itself out by agreeing to carry certain items from the previous agenda (like Israeli aggression against Iraq) over to the next one. Still, this meeting provides an opportunity for the U.N. to proclaim its own relevance, something it does with surprising confidence and frequency these days. The outgoing GA president, an Argentine, stoutly declares that "this, more than any other time, is the time for the United Nations." In "the post-Cold War world" of today, the U.N. has "demonstrated its efficiency." (The 1988 Nobel Peace Prize to the U.N. Peacekeeping Forces is the Organization's chief current point of pride.) Perez de Cuellar, in his annual report, took similar note of the "conciliatory atmosphere around the world" as a nourishing one for the U.N. The superpower thaw is thought to be good for business, even though the INF treaty he extols on page 14 was the result of American willingness to play bilateral nuclear chess. (A prisoner of the U.N.'s inflated language, the SG even oversells the idea of trying not to oversell the U.N., saying there must continue to be a "rigorous analysis" of its limitations and a "constant review" of its peacekeeping methods.)

The U.N.'s supposed new usefulness is a theme now being echoed by the United States. At an editors' breakfast sponsored by the United Nations Association (with DPI cooperation) on the day the 44th General Assembly opens, Ambassador Pickering says that name-calling at the U.N. has "diminished markedly," maybe 1000 percent in recent years, and that reductions of the bloated Secretariat staff are under way: the goal is to cut it by 15 percent. A man who looks bland and paunchy sitting down, but formidable standing up, Pickering, who was U.S. ambassador to Israel and El Salvador, is also, rhetorically, no Kirkpatrick or Moynihan. But their eras, when the U.S. *was* briefly willing to speak in relative terms, are in the past. The administration of George Bush, a former U.N. ambassador himself, has decided to play nice. It "strongly welcomes" the U.N. observers for upcoming elections in Nicaragua, for example.

The U.N. is clearly happy with the change of heart, because more than anyone else it is still the U.S. that—to paraphrase Ronald Reagan—is paying for the microphone. The administration has asked for full funding of U.S. assessments this year, and is also asking Congress to appropriate our "arrearages," the money held back by the Reagan Administration in more contentious times. Another reason the U.N. is glad of the rapprochement is temperamental: as Shirley Hazzard says, the Organization demands "a bedside manner from the world." It simply hates being criticized, even by the oafish United States. One notices how François Giuliani, the SG's spokesman, and other Secretariat people will respond to simple questions as affronts, as if any inquisitiveness necessarily betokens bad faith.

Thérèse Paquet-Sevigny, the undersecretary-general for public information, follows Ambassador Pickering at the editors' breakfast. A peppy Canadian who wears a black pleated skirt

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and smokes little cigars, she seems yet one more throwback to the 1950s, an appealing one. She says the U.N. places "such great value on U.S. opinion" not only because of the size of the American financial contribution, but because of U.S. values, too. During the past several weeks, this is the only time I have heard American values praised in the United Nations, and it comes as something of a shock. But Miss Paquet-Sevigny's business is public relations. Her office watches a lot of polling, and she is pleased to report that the U.N. has rebounded from a 1985 low point, when 54 percent of Americans thought it was doing a poor job, to the mere 29 percent who think that's the case now. Unfortunately most Americans just don't know either way, and "an enormous effort" is required to explain the U.N.'s role to them.

If the U.N. does require a bedside manner, the United Nations Association, which was headed for a number of years by Elliot Richardson, is its most solicitous hand-holder. UNA-USA, which according to one pamphlet seeks to make the U.N. "even more effective," is represented at this morning's breakfast by John Tessitore, a slightly pudgy, gold-wire-rimmed fellow resembling an assistant professor who won't get tenure. He says he's "not here to sell" the U.N., "wonderful product" though it is. Rather, the UNA wishes to use "candor" and admit the Organization's weaknesses along with its strengths.

As it turns out, a number of the speakers laid on for the editors throughout the day display the same testy defensiveness as the SG's spokesman. In a panel on "Human Rights and the U.N.," Bertie Ramcharan, a principal officer of the Secretariat, speaks of the six components of the "human-rights infrastructure" and the five "building blocks" for dealing with human rights violations, though he seems less than eager when asked to quantify instances where U.N. intervention has really made a difference to someone's human rights. Felice Gaer, executive director of the International League for Human Rights, tells what she thinks is the sadly amusing story of one media organization based in Paris that sent its *wine critic* to cover a Geneva meeting at which the Afghans would be directly questioned about human rights violations. Afterwards, no story ever ran. When asked why, the reporter explained that nothing happened after the questioning—no vote, no action, nothing. Of course it was the wine critic and not Miss Gaer who got the point, but this is the sort of story that makes UNA people shake their heads with the self-satisfaction of the uselessly well-intentioned.

M. Jean-Claude Faby, deputy director, U.N. Environment Program, New York Liaison Office, is actually impressive in his own *tour d'horizon* of global concerns, but he too has the U.N. disease, noting with pleasure that Shevardnadze now devotes five pages of some utterance, instead of five lines, to environmental matters. Similarly sympathetic is James P. Grant, the head of UNICEF, who has the craggy good looks and gravelly voice of the actor Hal Holbrook. In talking about his group's dependence on voluntary contributions and fundraising, he notes that, while still much less than those from the U.S., Soviet contributions are now twelve times what they were not long ago. Unfortunately, he adds, they come in rubles, which are supposed to be used to buy Soviet supplies, and in these days of perestroika, a lot of Soviet suppliers won't accept rubles. So UNICEF is trying to get the Soviets to make their contribution in convertible currency. As Mr. Grant is introduced we learn that 40,000 children die every twenty-four hours from hunger and disease—"a Hiroshima every three days." Unfortunately, Mr. Grant is the luncheon speaker, and we learn this while we're drinking wine, eating portions of chicken twice as big as anyone needs, and awaiting a heavy dessert.

The UNA-sponsored day moves slowly along as clouds roll over the East River and the landscape of northwest Queens, whose church spires, smokestacks, and watertowers, as well as Pepsi-Cola sign, have scarcely ever looked more inviting. The second to last speaker, on the subject "Global Hotspots," is Giandomenico Picco, the SG's special assistant, who talks about the U.N.-sponsored Iran-Iraq cease-fire and sees a "renaissance of the U.N." now that unilateralism's failure is recognized. "Multilateralism" is the good word at the U.N., but one suspects that the Iran-Iraq cease-fire was in fact a triumph of bilateralism—namely, the mutual exhaustion, after eight years and one million deaths, of Iran and Iraq. Mr. Picco says that once you take a side in a dispute you are introducing power, not peace. What he does not mention is what one always learned about the U.N. in elementary school—that what was supposed to distinguish it from the paralyzed League of Nations was precisely its ability to introduce power—its own—into disputes. (The official U.N. tour does not stop at the plaque in the lobby put up "in grateful remembrance of the Armed Forces of Member States who died in Korea in the Service of the United Nations 1950-1953.")

Finally Hedi Annabi, the special assistant to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Humanitarian Affairs South-East Asia, discusses, somewhat bewilderingly, how the Cambodian peace conference that collapsed in Paris last August was, in fact, a partial success. Keith Burris from the *Hartford Courant*, sitting next to me, whispers an explanation of what the parties accomplished: "They've agreed on rebuilding the country after they have the next civil war."

The U.N.'s supposed new usefulness is a theme now being echoed by the United States.

The 44th General Assembly has elected Joseph Nanven Garba of Nigeria to be its president. Looking down from the topmost gallery on this opening day, one can see the nameplates for countries one's never even heard of: just behind Madagascar and a few seats to the right of Mozambique is Myanmar. (Myanmar turns out to be the new name for Burma.) The delegates sit behind shiny, lime-colored table-tops as an Austrian is elected president of the Sixth, or Legal, Committee. Since the U.N.'s recent experience with Austria has been more on the criminal side of things, it's nice to have yet more evidence that the Organization doesn't hold a grudge. Costa Rica's three seats are occupied by women in bright clothes: two are in yellow tops and another is in black-and-white swirls. One watches things like this because the proceedings themselves are impossible, though not difficult, to follow. George Orwell came to realize that his public school was "a world where it was *not possible* for [him] to be good," and by now I have realized that the United Nations is a world in which it is not possible to pay attention. The vice presidents of the General Assembly are being elected, and Yemen has "gracefully yielded" its candidature to Iraq. The representative of Bahrain praises Yemen by saying that "A friend in need is a friend indeed," noting that the prophet Mohammed said Yemen is the land of wisdom.

There are 155 items on the GA's agenda this fall, ranging from the eternal (Palestine, apartheid) to the obscure (#29—"Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte") to the merely puzzling: #42—"Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present [sic] United States Administration in April 1986."

But before these items can be discussed there are the weeks of speeches by heads of state and foreign ministers. Historic utterances (by the new Polish foreign minister, for example) capture more attention here than they might in another venue. But in the world of one-nation, one-vote, the U.N. is seen putting ministers from Fiji, Cape Verde, and Luxembourg under the same spotlight for the same number of minutes. On September 29, Dr. Virgilio Barco Vargas, president of Colombia, receives a standing ovation, mostly for having managed to finish his speech without being assassinated by the Medellin drug cartel.

In a northeast corner of the General Assembly Building the Meditation Room is open to visitors. It seems a place designed more to frighten than soothe, a small stone-floored trapezoid, by my measure fifteen paces by seven at its widest points. An abstract fresco is at the narrow end, and in the back are eleven small benches with straw seats. It is dark in here. A small single bulb in the center of the ceiling bathes a block of naked stone—like a denuded altar—in weak light. Sitting down in back one has the feeling of being in a ransacked chapel, a place with no clear sign of what to pray to, a place so determinedly universal as to be unreal, like the United Nations itself, which, in its attempt to create one world, ultimately reminds one of those apparently bogus experiments in "cold fusion"—room-temperature panaceas produced on the cheap and, finally, against the laws of nature. We live, after all, in an age marked less by recombination than by an ever greater provincialism. From Quebec to Eritrea, the world, as it becomes ever smaller, wishes to be ever more local. Indeed, one of the Léger murals in the General Assembly hall looks like an amoeba quivering in the struggle to divide. The totemless Meditation Room is the Stonehenge of an era whose hopes never came to pass because it couldn't get people to hope them. After two months at the United Nations I have seen the past—and it still doesn't work. More than anything, the Meditation Room is a relief from the endlessly verbose Organization itself, providing as it does a chance to sit and follow the instructions on a sign near its entrance, a sign announcing that you have arrived, at last, at a place where "only thoughts should speak." □

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BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

It's that time of year again, as eminent readers and writers recommend tomes—some old, some new—certain to delight giver, recipient, and Santa alike.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS

The bicentennial of the French Revolution moved me to read two very different, and very fine, books worth recommending. The first is one of the year's hits, Simon Schama's *Citizens*. Schama deserves all the praise he has gotten: the book is extremely lively and lots of fun, as well as a significant contribution to the new scholarship about the Revolution. Not to be missed.

Reading *Citizens* brought very much to mind again Talleyrand, that intriguing figure who survived, and indeed flourished, under the Ancien Regime, Directorate, Consulate, Empire, and Restoration. During the worst days of the Terror, he found himself in America—a story which alone is worth a book. The best biography in English is still Duff Cooper's *Talleyrand*, written in 1937. It's a very old fashioned book: just the facts, no psychobabble, lit up not by the author's prose but by the subject's brilliance. Your local bookstore does not have this in the window, but with perseverance you can dig up a copy—and won't be sorry.

Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state in the Reagan Administration, practices law in Washington.

LEE ATWATER

The Prince—Machiavelli
The Republic—Plato
Crime and Punishment—Dostoevsky
Huey Long—T. Harry Williams
Art of War—Sun Tzu
Stonewall Jackson—Burke Davis

Lee Atwater is chairman of the Republican National Committee.

JACQUES BARZUN

In the excellent series of Lakeside Classics privately published by R. R. Donnelly, the great Chicago printers, Volume 62, issued in 1964, is a particular treasure. Under the title *Two Views of Gettysburg*, it contains an English colonel's report as observer on the Confederate side and Lieutenant Frank Haskell's account as Unionist participant. Both are readable and in many ways amazing, but Haskell's work is an ignored masterpiece of American literature. Though the lieutenant was bred a lawyer, he is a born stylist, a brilliant observer of man and nature, and a true philosopher, for whom war is not all horror and glory. The pair, moreover, are types we shall not soon meet again—men of honor.

John Lukacs is well known for his histories and with special esteem for his work of theory, *Historical Consciousness*. Now he has delved into his own past and produced the *Confessions of an Original Sinner*. Like any good intellectual autobiography, it is rich in explicit opinion and intimate fact, but two things about it are uncommonly agreeable: the intimacy is dignified, not obtrusive; and the opinion, which somehow comes naturally out of the events related, is easy to agree or disagree with. In short, the character self-portrayed is both likable and worthy of respect. He calls himself a reactionary largely because he reacts, and an original sinner not because he has invented new sins, but because he shows his modest performance in that line as originating decisions and conditioning thought.

The figure of Berlioz the creator is now pretty well known, in the best way possible, by his great works. But it took some doing to pull him out of obscurity and misrepresentation. It was done first through many scholars publishing evidence and argument, and then by the proof engraved on long-playing discs. Now after nearly half a century, it has become possible to write a dispassionate, leisurely biography, and the English critic and conductor David Cairns has done it. The first volume is out and it is a delight. His grasp of the many-sided subject and his engaging prose give the large book the speed of good fiction and make the prospect of the next anything but daunting.

Quite different, but properly so, is W. L. Morison's study of *John Austin*—no, not a misprint for Jane Austen, let us give her a rest from palaver. John Austin was the founder in the early nineteenth century of an important school of jurisprudence, now supposedly outgrown. Mr. Morison shows the opposite by combining technical exposition with intellectual history. At the end, he finds the modern sequel to the original Austinism in the work of Harold Lasswell. At that point, I had one balk—the latter's vague language and loose-jointed ideas repel and I question the link. But this closing section takes up only ten pages out of 200 and leaves what precedes a superb monograph.

In his eightieth year, Patrick Devlin, the greatest English judge of our time, did a unique thing: he wrote an account of a famous criminal trial over which he himself had presided. The case was that of Dr. Adams, accused of having drugged to death his elderly women patients in order to secure their gifts by will. Lord Devlin's book, *Easing the Passing*, is a wonderful interweaving of the substance of the trial, including material evidence and cross-examination, with his inner debate about the decisions he made and with his reflections on the law and those who administered it on that occasion.

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The work is a worthy addition to his earlier writings on the modern criminal law in England.

Jacques Barzun's most recent book is The Culture We Deserve *(Wesleyan University Press).*

L. BRENT BOZELL III

Lost Illusions, by Freda Utley. A powerful book giving a first-hand view of the horrors imposed on those Russians who rejected Stalin's Communism. The book is hard to find, but worth the effort.

Chronicles of Narnia, by C. S. Lewis. No child should be deprived the opportunity to read this series of wondrous tales by the great philosopher. If you missed them as a child, you're still not too old to enjoy them.

The Killer Angels, by Michael Shaara. Senator Steve Symms, a Civil War enthusiast, told me this is the finest book ever written about the Battle of Gettysburg. He was, as usual, right.

Centennial, by James Michener. Of all Michener epics, this is his best, in my opinion. A history of the American West, the book traces its beginnings to the days of the cave-dwellers and takes us on a wonderful, exciting journey to the present.

Witness, by Whittaker Chambers. No believer in freedom—or, rather, the struggle for freedom—can omit this book from any list of recommended readings. In this age of glasnost, Chambers's message is more important than ever before.

L. Brent Bozell III is chairman of the Media Research Center and publisher of MediaWatch.

M. E. BRADFORD

In our formative years and while we are in the midst of our education—before we have, in an intellectual sense, assumed a stance and character—it is natural, when asked about what books seem most important to us, that we speak of discoveries and of the joy that comes with first acquaintance and fresh insight into matters that once seemed mysterious. At the other end of the journey, the predictable inclination is in the opposite direction, toward remembrance of books whose importance we have recognized for many years and whose function in illuminating our lives in both the moral and the intellectual sense is beyond dispute. Therefore, it is proper that as a list of recommended books I offer nothing new, but rather a set of old friends in whose merits I continue to delight: works which have passed the test of long familiarity and frequent use.

I begin with William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942), which I first read seriously while a young naval officer sailing the Pacific on the *USS Hornet* in the spring of 1957. Moved by distance and new experience to reflect upon what family and regional history had done to the life of Faulkner's hero, Isaac McCaslin, I pondered his retreat from engagement in time with a mixture of impatience and sympathy. In perfect contrast to Faulkner's Ike is the subject of J. Evetts Haley's *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman* (1936). Haley's biography is a heroic narrative, powerfully written, dramatic and persuasive, of the cattle kingdom and its unfolding north and west from Fort Worth after 1865: of the great age of the cattle drives, an enterprise in which my mother's people played a role and which therefore speaks to me in a personal way.

Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1923) came into my hands when his discussion of the "numinous experience," of the power, majesty, and holiness of God, was of direct assistance in resisting the modernist demand that we consider the Deity "socially" or "scientifically," without too much "mythologizing" about divinity per se. The gods of the philosophers and millenarians are nothing beside the God of Job, the Crucifixion, and Gospel of John. I often recommend Otto's book to young people who have just realized that it is not enough merely to read Holy Scripture in anachronistic innocence or to worship with no sense of what it is that we honor and praise.

Russell Kirk's *The Roots of American Order* (1975) achieves an inclusive vision of American history and institutions, of our origins and the impetus of our collective past, which no one else in our time could have made. As I have argued before, Kirk is an American Cicero (as he was even thirty-five years ago) in apprehending the American enterprise according to a long view of things. Without him conservatism as an intellectually identifiable movement in these United States is unimaginable. His analysis in *Roots of American Order* allows us to determine what is central and what ephemeral in the American record.

A Wake for the Living (1975) by Andrew Nelson Lytle is exceptional among modern books, a full evocation of the old agricultural, familial order of life which came to an end in both North and South with the conclusion of the War Between the States. It reinforces in the context of Lytle's own part of American history the interpretation offered in Kirk's majestic synthesis and in the rendering of Faulkner's novel. In this elegiac narrative the themes of personal responsibility and heroic achievement developed in Haley's *Goodnight* are in the end reaffirmed. Moreover, the book is suffused with what Richard Weaver called "the older religiousness," the sense of human finitude which is the basis for Otto's great hymn to mystery—and not so frightening as it might be as we come, in such company, to contemplate what Christmas signifies.

M. E. Bradford, professor of English at the University of Dallas, has recently published (with Regnery Gateway) an edition, From Eden to Babylon: The Social and Political Essays of Andrew Nelson Lytle, *and (with Sherwood Sugdon & Co.) a new collection,* The Reactionary Imperative: Essays Literary and Political.

JOHN BUCKLEY

Ninety-Two in the Shade, by Thomas McGuane: the third novel by our Republic's finest comic writer, with prose whose power-to-weight ratio matches a Suzuki motorcycle. It's a funny/sad tale of rivalry between a countercultural burnout and would-be fishing guide and the cranky old thug whose tactics to restrain trade culminate in murder.

The Names, by Don DeLillo: DeLillo's 1982 warm-up for *White Noise* and *Libra*; a crackling novel of language and politics set in Athens circa 1980. In a story about an expatriate American's inadvertent discovery of a pattern of ritual cult killings throughout Greece and the Middle East, DeLillo explores the origins of language, the disorientation of travel in the modern age, and the fragility of being American in a perilous region. A great book.

Gravity's Rainbow, by Thomas Pynchon: still *the* unrivaled postwar epic, which somehow, miraculously, renders the birth of the nuclear age as a modern day farce. Read it now before *Vineland*, Pynchon's first novel since *G.R.*, is published in February.

Second Skin, by John Hawkes: long before Hawkes's novels became too precious, he was an American modernist with a breathtaking style, drunk with language, direct as a dagger's thrust. The story of a father on an icy island off the coast of Maine, trying to prevent his daughter's suicide as she mourns the murder of her husband at the end of World War II. An underappreciated American classic.

Money, by Martin Amis: a portrait of vulgarism and excess set in New York and London in the Reagan/Thatcher years by the most important comic novelist of his generation on either side of the Atlantic. While politically he may be dumber than an eggplant, Amis nonetheless writes sentences that make one howl with laughter, and, especially in *Money*, does so in an utterly convincing and wicked narrative voice.

John Buckley is the author of the novel Family Politics *(Simon and Schuster, 1988) and the upcoming* Statute of Limitations, *a Washington comedy to be published in 1990.*

RONALD E. BURR

Khe Sanh: Siege in the Clouds, by Eric Hammel (Crown, $24.95). Not everyone was at Woodstock in the late 1960s. In Vietnam 5,000 United States Marines underwent a torturous three-month siege at the hands of more than 15,000 NVA. It was thought that General Giap would attempt another Dien Bien Phu, in which case the 101st Airborne was on standby to encircle the NVA regulars encircling our troops. Eric Hammel has compiled a superb oral history of those first three months in 1968 at Khe Sanh. Most impressive is his ability to report the horrors, tragedy, and bravery of the men who experienced it all.

Biographies make fine holiday gifts, especially for students who need role models (as RET reminds us in his editorial on page 10). What better biographies to suggest than those of two great American heroes.

Abraham Lincoln, by Benjamin P. Thomas ($10.95). First published in 1952 and still available through the Modern Library. It's probably the best single-volume biography of Lincoln.

Washington, by Douglas Southall Freeman. The complete seven-volume set is in print; an abridged volume edited in 1968 by Richard Harwell is also available (Charles Scribner's Sons, $18.95). Winter is a good time to reflect on how Washington kept a ragtag army together with little money and few supplies, and still managed to defeat the world's foremost power. Freeman's accounts of Washington's farewell to his officers at Fraunces Tavern and to the Continental Congress in Annapolis are unforgettable.

Of the many memoirs published by former members of the Reagan Administration, John F. Lehman, Jr.'s *Command of the Seas* (Charles Scribner's Sons, $21.95) deserves special mention. It is a fascinating book by the former secretary of the Navy who had the courage to take on Washington's well-heeled defense establishment.

Finally, for our Indiana subscribers, or for those who wish they lived in the birthplace of Booth Tarkington, Thomas Riley ("What America needs is a good 5-cent cigar") Marshall, and *The American Spectator*, I recommend

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Natural Features of Indiana, published by the American Midland Naturalist (University of Notre Dame, $10). It is a thorough description of the physiography of the Hoosier state, including climate, geology, water, plants, animals, forests, and other interesting features of God's handiwork. With this book you can renew your communion with nature, and enjoy the Hoosier state even more.

Ronald E. Burr is publisher of The American Spectator.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

For Christmas giving there is Kenneth Adelman's *The Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry—A Skeptic's Account* (Simon and Schuster). Adelman has decided that worries about arms limitation are not a key to peace. The interminable arguments and parade of figures at Geneva and Vienna never result in anything "substantive." So Adelman has resigned as the Republican party's arms controller. He isn't really letting Ronald Reagan or George Bush down, for they are SDI supporters who want to find satisfaction in a different direction. They want "brilliant pebbles" that will take on missiles in outer space regardless of numbers.

Peace, so Adelman has decided, is a habit of mind. In Europe such a habit predominated from 1815, the year of Napoleon's downfall, to August of 1914. So let us come to Numbers Two, Three, and Four in my Christmas book list. Two and Three are Arthur Bryant's two books, *Years of Victory* and *The Age of Elegance*. Number Four is Harold Nicolson's *The Congress of Vienna*. These books launch us into the story of the great peaceful century, which only had to put up with Bismarck's limited skirmishes of 1866 and 1870.

How did we ever see such a century? Could it have been because the Age of Ideology hadn't really dawned? People were reading William Graham Sumner, the Yale pioneer sociologist who said: "If people are mad enough, they will fight; if not, the ordinary means of diplomacy will do."

Adelman wants to go back to "ordinary means," as does Irving Kristol. People are coming to realize that Eastern Europe is too small a place to start a war, and they are beginning to suspect the world itself is too limited a theater for unleashing heavy stuff that will ruin a whole hemisphere. So why not dawdle over arms control when nothing is going to happen anyway?

Do such sentiments set things up for Gorbachev? He doesn't seem very anxious to fight, either.

John Chamberlain is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of A Life With the Printed Word.

JOHN EHRLICHMAN

I suggest two books:

Peking Story, by David Kidd (Clarkson N. Potter). A fascinating account of the author's four years in Peking from 1946 to 1950, two years before the Communist Revolution and two years after. As the old order passed, Kidd fell in love and married an aristocrat. His new family failed to cope with the People's Republic and gradually lost its mansion and way of life.

The World of Patience Gromes: Making and Unmaking a Black Community, by Scott C. Davis (University Press of Kentucky). This is the story of the black community of Fulton, Virginia, (near Richmond) begun after the Civil War and ultimately destroyed by urban renewal during the War on Poverty.

Scott Davis worked there during the Vietnam war (he was a conscientious objector) and has written a gripping story of what happened to the real and interesting people who lived in Fulton. It should be required reading for every social worker and planner who wields power over communities in the name of doing good.

John Ehrlichman is at work on a novel for Simon and Schuster involving the trial of an impeached President.

PETER R. KANN

Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow*, a chilling account of the Soviet terror-famine of the early thirties, focused particularly on the Ukraine, which killed some 15 million peasants. Gripping, gruesome history. And a grim reminder of the nature of the system that now spawns Gorbachev's so-called new Soviet man.

Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, which, for the few who haven't yet read it, is simply the funniest novel of the 1980s. Like an Olympic archer, Wolfe hits his targets every time. And proves, over and over, that fiction can foreshadow fact.

Finally, *The Lady With the Alligator Purse* by Nadine Westcott. I can claim, conservatively, to have read it more than 200 times in the past six months. The slim and handsomely illustrated volume is a powerful satire on the foibles of the medical profession and an ode to the therapeutic benefits of pizza. It is to my two-year-old daughter what *Bonfire* was to me. But I only read *Bonfire* twice.

Peter R. Kann is publisher of the Wall Street Journal *and president of Dow Jones.*

FLORENCE KING

My "desert island" book is Nancy Hale's 1942 novel, *The Prodigal Women*. The beautiful bluestocking heroine is a bona fide misanthrope, and the Great American Breast-Cupping Scene, which is about as stimulating as watching Julia Child construct a pastry cone, is absent from its pages. My fondness for underlining really nasty sentences is more than satisfied by *Reflections of a Russian Statesman*, by Konstantin Pobedonostsev. The author, who died in 1907, says things about "the fantasy of universal enlightenment" that you will never find in an NEA press release. Tom Cullen's 1954 study of Jack the Ripper, *When London Walked in Terror*, is not only a classic of the true-crime genre but a fine wine of wishful thinking to be sipped after watching Molly Yard and Eleanor Smeal on television. Jogger-haters and other enemies of health will be restored by the chapter called "Black Coffee" in Stefan Zweig's *Balzac*, which contains a truly inspiring estimate of the number of cups the great novelist drank during his sedentary career of 18-hour work days. For patriotic thrills try Margaret Coit's 1950 Pulitzer Prize biography, *John C. Calhoun*, which inspired my motto: If at first you don't secede, try, try again.

Florence King's essays on American life, Reflections in a Jaundiced Eye, *will soon be followed by a companion volume,* Lump It or Leave It, *to be published in 1990 by St. Martin's Press. She is a member of the National Book Critics Circle, which she calls the "Lit Critters," and has served on the Usage Panel of* The American Heritage Dictionary.

RICHARD G. LUGAR

Nicaragua, by Shirley Christian (Random House)—a remarkable account of the intertwining history of the United States and Nicaragua.

More Like Us, by James Fallows (Houghton Mifflin)—a provocative and timely viewpoint on Japan.

The Rise and Decline of Nations, by Mancur Olson (Yale University Press)—although published in 1982, an important message for Americans seeking understanding of the structural rigidities of various national economies and the ways that we might gain greater freedom to progress.

In Our Image, by Stanley Karnow (Random House)—a comprehensive history of the United States in the Philippines at a time when both countries must reach major decisions on the relationship.

After Apartheid: The Solution for South Africa, by Frances Kendall and Leon Louw (ICS Press)—a bestseller in South Africa when published over three years ago, this book attempts to defuse the question of racial dominance by suggesting a governance system based on the Swiss canton structure.

These five books will all be stimulating for readers interested in the foreign policy of our country.

Richard G. Lugar is the senior senator from Indiana and former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

WILLIAM McGURN

For those who like to take their Christmas seasons with some history, Jan Morris's *Hong Kong* is the perfect companion to a roaring fire and a glass of eggnog. Miss Morris begins with the colony's origins as a spoil of the war Britain fought for the right to sell opium to the Chinese, and she traces its development to the modern financial center that Mrs. Thatcher intends to hand over to the Communist mainland against the will of the locals. A splendid mix of fact, anecdote, and folklore, the book provides a vivid portrait for those who have never been and a fitting epitaph for those who have.

Closer to home, Liberty Press's new collection of letters and speeches by the Father of Our Country goes nicely under any tree. *George Washington: A Collection* reveals a man whose entire life was devoted to the overriding goal of American union, the ultimate achievement of which would not have been possible without him. Whatever else, the collection dispels any suggestion that the General was a political naif.

For those new mommies and daddies, Christine Allison's *I'll Tell You a Story, I'll Sing You a Song* is just the thing. Mrs. A., wife of *National Review*'s new publisher, includes within her two covers every rhyme, fable, and song you half remember from childhood. All the classics are here, and *TAS* readers will happily note that they have not been sanitized: the big, bad wolf gets it with the woodsman's ax, and other beasts are dispatched in a similar manner whenever they are found threatening kindly old grandmothers and unsuspecting smaller prey. I

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recommend the book without any embarrassment or hope of financial recompense, because the ten I have already given away have brought requests for as many more.

Finally, any one of George MacDonald Fraser's "Flashman" novels. For the uninitiated, these are the would-be papers of Harry Flashman, the bully from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* whom author Fraser has resurrected as a hero of the Crown. Well, not quite, for Flashie remains the consummate coward (as he is the first to admit), whoring, bribing, and conning his way through all the decisive events of nineteenth-century history, including a memorable meeting with young Congressman Lincoln in *Flash for Freedom*. Guaranteed to coax a smile from the Grinch himself.

William McGurn is Washington bureau chief for National Review.

JAY McINERNEY

Don Quixote (1605-1615), by Miguel de Cervantes; the first novel and still the best. I much prefer it without music.

Lost Illusions (1837-1843), by Honoré de Balzac; even in translation, this is a better novel about New York in the 1980s than *The Bonfire of the Vanities.*

Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds (1841), by Charles Mackay; the classic study of alchemy, witch-hunting, investing in tulip bulbs, Jim and Tammy, and the stock market of the 1980s.

Ulysses (1921), by James Joyce. The new computerized corrected edition, whatever its faults, is a good excuse to re-read this mega-novel, or to read it for the first time and *claim* that you're re-reading it to check for errors.

Bordeaux (1985), by Robert Parker, Jr.; the greatest reference book since Ernest Schweibert's *Trout.*

Jay McInerney is the author of Bright Lights, Big City, Ransom, *and* Story of My Life.

DAPHNE MERKIN

After considerable deliberation, I've settled on the following:

The Movie Goer, by Walker Percy. Almost three decades after its publication, this novel remains an amazingly prescient account of the peculiar contemporary malaise of fandom. It contains the most laconic narrative voice and some of the best dialogue around.

Edwin Mulhouse: The Life and Death of an American Writer, by Steven Milhauser. Milhauser's obsessive look at the obsessive nature of childhood is imbued with a Proustian quality of memory. As far removed from the hip, disaffected flavor of most of our more recent fiction as one can get.

The Death of the Heart, by Elizabeth Bowen. An example of modern British fiction at its highly conscious, civilization-threatened-by-chaos best; in the Jamesian tradition, but less involuted and more accessible. A perfectly poised novel, yet not without enormous reserves of compassion.

To the Lighthouse, by Virginia Woolf. Virginia Woolf at her most capacious. A brilliant depiction of the experience of mothering and being mothered, rendered all the more poignant by the author's early loss of her own mother, and her own childlessness.

Capote: A Biography, by Gerald Clarke. An utterly absorbing, unreductive biography of a dazzling, imploding talent. The best literary biography to come along in years.

Daphne Merkin is author of the novel Enchantment, *which won the Edward Lewis Wallant Award for Jewish fiction in 1986. Her essay, "Dreaming of Hitler: A Memoir of Self-Hatred," appears in the recently published anthology,* Testimony: Contemporary Writers Make the Holocaust Personal. *A collection of her pieces—as well as a second novel, entitled* The Discovery of Sex—*will be published by Poseidon Press/Simon and Schuster. Merkin is associate publisher and vice president of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.*

RICHARD MERKIN

A Walk on the Wild Side: Nelson Algren's most wonderful book, a suite of hallucinatory memories of New Orleans in the early thirties. It should be made into a film (again) by David Lynch, now that John Huston is gone.

The Sweet Science: no New Yawker's reading list is complete without Joe Liebling. I adore *The Honest Rainmaker*, but *Science* is the finest thing on boxing ever, or certainly after Pierce Egan, Liebling's spiritual mentor.

The Most of S. J. Perelman: any "Most of" or "Best of" is rather a copout, I know, but this collection is just so rich I couldn't help myself. The apex of the Perelman pyramid for me is *Is There a Doctor in the Cast* which I've been reading for twenty-five years (at least) and have been shamefully but delicately ripping off for nearly as long.

The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: I know, I know, but "The Sea Change" is simply haunting and no one ever talks about it. The same goes for "Hills Like White Elephants," an extended and touching confrontation between lovers about abortion.

The High Hard One: a rough and tumble and *real* biography of Kirby Higbe, a grand red-neck in the Grand Tradition who pitched for Brooklyn (and a few other teams) back when pitchers neither graduated from high school nor maintained a staff of financial advisors. The definitive antidote for a case of severe Orel Hershiser-itis.

Richard Merkin is a Limner, Columnist, Educator, Amateur Baseball Historian, Good Time Sport, and member of The Fancy, In Good Standing.

CHARLES MURRAY

For fun and profit too, I loved *The Examined Life*, by Robert Nozick, and *Microcosm*, by George Gilder. Each of them is quirky, preposterously ambitious, and successful. Each, in its own way, is likely to affect the way you look at the world.

Just for fun—but what great fun—there's *Water Music*, by T. Coraghessan Boyle, sort of a Marx-Brothers-Go-to-Darkest-Africa set in 1795; and Pete Dexter's *Deadwood*, a wonderful time-machine Western of the *Lonesome Dove* variety.

Charles Murray is senior research fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980 *and* In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government.

ROBERT NISBET

Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919). The father of modern geopolitics makes it lastingly evident that as long as the Heartland and the World Island exist there is no end to history.

Charles H. McIlwain, *Constitutionalism* (1939). As the Court legislates, as Congress tergiversates, and as the Executive salivates, it is tonic to re-read this hard-nosed classic.

Bertrand de Jouvenel, *The Ethics of Redistribution* (1952). Only Hayek has rivaled Jouvenel in the demonstration of why it is the inexorable fate of redistributionist programs to culminate in centralization of the state's power instead of in relief to hapless minorities.

Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men* (1986). This fascinating group portrait of Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, and McCloy is also a superb piece of postwar foreign policy history. Reads like a novel.

André Jardin, *Tocqueville* (1988). The first full biography of its subject and it is wholly admirable. Through it we can see at last why the full man is greater even than the author of *Democracy in America.*

Robert Nisbet's most recent book is Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship *(Regnery). He is at work on a memoir of Berkeley.*

MICHAEL NOVAK

As the axis of the world tilts away from politics and economics, toward questions of how humans ought to live, those who wish to celebrate Christmas by recalling the new ethos announced at the Mass of Christ's birthday could hardly do better than to expose themselves to the writings of the remarkable Christian philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973). The Notre Dame University Press is a good place to look for paperback titles otherwise out of print.

No doubt the central volume is *Existence and the Existent* (1948), a slim little set of chapters on the main spine of the Christian intellectual tradition, the "intuition of being." This intuition begins in wonder that this blue-orbed earth exists at all; that it is fit for human habitation as no other part of the universe is; and that it comes with no guarantee of lasting forever. Some think it began with a Big Bang and will end with one; its existence is not necessary. But it does exist now, is beautiful, and spurs the most remarkable wonder—and thanksgiving.

Flowing from this vision is another short volume, *On Christian Philosophy* (1955). In its essence, philosophy is grounded—for any philosopher worth her salt—on evidence and methods that spring from the best that human intelligence can push itself to. In its actual, existing situation, however, philosophy is practiced by men and women who are born out of the belly of a woman at a particular time and place, within a particular horizon, living within concrete communities. When considering how humans ought to live, existing philosophers necessarily borrow from other sciences, whose methods are different, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology—yes, and theology. Jewish and Christian moral theology raises new questions for philosophers: about the recurring human weakness of will, for example, and the nature of God, whom so many humans seek. Without mixing up theology or faith with philosophy, which has its own rules of evidence and method—without fideism, fundamentalism, or any infidelity to philosophy itself—existing philosophers consider the same domain of human moral striving that moral theology and faith consider. The happy

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break for Jewish and Christian philosophers is that "our God is reasonable," that truth is one, and that both languages—of philosophy and faith—address from different angles the same existents. A fuller treatment will be found in Maritain's *Science and Wisdom* (1940).

Add to these Maritain's marvelous studies of politics, *Man and the State* (1951), *Christianity and Democracy* (1944), and *Reflections on America* (1958). Almost singlehandedly, Maritain supplied the theory from which the Christian Democratic parties of Europe and Latin America sprang after World War II. Especially influential here was *Integral Humanism* (1936).

No Christian layman of the last two centuries covered more ground—or covered it more deeply—than Jacques Maritain. His *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953) and *The Responsibility of the Artist* (1960) are wonderfully proportional, beautiful studies, for example, in which both Senator Helms and the National Endowment for the Arts might find much illumination in their present perplexities. It's hard, indeed, to think of a better author to introduce oneself to for Christmas 1989, or any other time.

Michael Novak is the George F. Jewett Scholar in Religion, Philosophy, and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute and the publisher of Crisis, *a lay Catholic magazine. His most recent book is* Free Persons and the Common Good *(Madison Books).*

ROBERT W. POOLE, JR.

In this time of growing enthusiasm for both Japan-bashing and Japan-aping (via high-tech industrial policy), one of the past year's most refreshing books was *The Third Century: America's Resurgence in the Asian Era.* Authors Joel Kotkin and Yoriko Kishimoto make a compelling case that America's greatest strengths are precisely those characteristics in which we are most *unlike* the Japanese: open markets, open borders, individualism, and entrepreneurship.

Amidst the worldwide retreat from socialism, F. A. Hayek's *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism* is a fitting epitaph. In this slender volume, Hayek distills a lifetime's study of how and why economies succeed or fail. It's an excellent introduction to the balance of his works.

Collectivism's failure is ultimately a moral issue, and there is still no book more on target as to the true moral dimension of the battle between individualism and collectivism than Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged.* Rand was way ahead of the intellectual world in coming to grips with this issue. Re-read the book and compare the hostility with which it was greeted in 1957 with the extent to which so many of its insights are now widely acknowledged.

Robert W. Poole, Jr. is president of the Reason Foundation and publisher of Reason *magazine.*

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

I could recommend Proust's novel, Wordsworth's complete poems, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall,* and Anthony Powell's *Music of Time* sequence. But here are some interesting titles that have recently come my way. Two books by young writers: *The Last to Go* (Harcourt Brace) by Rand Richards Cooper is a group of related stories that deals in an unsentimental, humorous, and also touching way with interactions among the members of a suburban family. Cooper's fastidious and probing style brings out all sorts of possibilities in his material. *Unfinished Painting* (Random House) by Mary Jo Salter is an elegant book of poems that deserves more notice than it's received. Insofar as she uses meter and stanza and rhyme to beautiful effect (especially in the poem "Dead Letters," written to her mother) Salter is a "formalist." But her intelligent writing is in the service of responsible, strong feeling.

Robert Penn Warren's recent death sent me back to his *New and Selected Poems* (Random House), particularly the first eighty-five pages of work he published in this decade's first half. Filled with final sayings, moments of ultimacy, poems such as "Rumor at Twilight," "Last Walk of Season," and "After the Dinner Party" have lodged themselves in the Anthology of our dreams. And in *Arturo Toscanini: Contemporary Recollections of the Maestro* (Da Capo Press), a great music critic, the late B. H. Haggin, meets a great conductor in Haggin's two books on Toscanini, now reprinted with new material.

There remains only to recommend the most recent novel I've read by the master, Anthony Trollope. *Is He Popenjoy?* (Oxford paper) is—like other of Trollope's later works—eminently sane, engaging, and thoroughly interesting. The title won't make any sense for a couple hundred pages, but you'll enjoy the trip anyway.

William H. Pritchard is the Henry Clay Folger Professor of English at Amherst College and the author, most recently, of Randall Jarrell: A Literary Life *(forthcoming from Farrar, Straus & Giroux).*

ARCHIE ROOSEVELT

A Place for Us, by Nicholas Gage (a sequel to the magnificent story of his martyred mother, *Eleni*), recounting the fascinating experiences of his passage from his ancestral mountain village in Greece and transition into his American present growing up in his ethnic family.

Special Relationships, by Henry Brandon, the story by a great Czech-born British correspondent, of his experiences and observations during almost fifty years in the corridors of power in Washington. An important contribution to the history of those turbulent years.

From Beirut to Jerusalem, by Thomas L. Friedman. A fascinating and moving account by an astute and insightful first-hand observer of the terrible struggle between Arabs and Jews in and around these two great centers of the storm. Mr. Friedman actually was better able to empathize with people on both sides of the barricades because of, not in spite of, his Jewish background.

A Peace to End All Peace, by David Fromkin, the story of the creation of the Middle East, the attempts of the various Great Powers to shape it, and the violent reactions of the peoples caught in this central arena of the World Stage.

Alaska, by James Michener. A paperback edition of this vast work which you can actually carry with you on holiday. The fictionalized account of the Russian and American invasion of this huge, forbidding territory, beginning with the arrival of its first daring explorers, the Eskimo and Indian tribes who had to endure that conquest.

Archie Roosevelt, a career intelligence officer, served in the Army from 1942-1947 and from 1947 through 1974 in the CIA. He is the author of a recent book on his experiences, For Lust of Knowing, *which still, after more than a year and a half, can be ordered at the bookstores. Since 1975 he has been director of international relations at the Chase Manhattan Bank.*

A. M. ROSENTHAL

All books I give for Christmas must meet three strict criteria.

1. They must be good.
2. The subject matter must particularly interest me.
3. They must be written by a friend or relative.

These seem to be reasonable criteria. Therefore:

From Beirut to Jerusalem, by Thomas L. Friedman. Tom won two Pulitzer Prizes for himself and the *New York Times* and is in danger of winning a third for this excellent book. That would put him in danger of physical assault throughout the journalistic world.

A Place for Us, by Nicholas Gage. Nick had the poor judgment to leave the *Times* but still remains a close friend and one of the most moving writers I've ever read. Anyone who has read his masterpiece *Eleni* about his mother should read this book about his father; give it to a friend.

In Exile from the Land of Snows, by John F. Avedon. The best book I have read about the Dalai Lama and the ravaging of the Tibetan people by the Chinese Communists. It was published in 1984 but is worth hunting down.

Kife: The Lives and Dreams of Soviet Youth, by Nancy Traver. A fine book on an important subject. It was written by my daughter-in-law, but that doesn't make it any less good.

Faces, by Shirley Lord. This is a gripping novel about the dangers of plastic surgery by the beauty director of *Vogue.* As soon as my wife writes her next novel, I will recommend that one too.

A. M. Rosenthal is former executive editor of and a columnist for the New York Times.

PATRICIA SCHROEDER

Put these books in your holiday stocking:

The Warrior Queens, by Antonia Fraser (Knopf). Warrior angels and iron ladies who entered where men quailed to tread.

The Good Neighbors: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean, by George Black (Pantheon). An illustrated linguistics book explaining why *capitalismo* is the Spanish word for "mercantilism" not "free enterprise," and why *democracia* doesn't mean much of anything at all.

Greetings from Colorado, by Marshall Sprague (Graphic Arts Center). Happy campers, jumping jackalopes, and cabbages as big as the Ritz: a lithochromed and hand-tinted postcard journey through Colorado in the first half of the twentieth century. The preface is written by a noted Colorado congresswoman.

Through African Eyes, by Leon C. Clark (CITE). African history as Africans tell it.

The Fatal Shore, by Robert Hughes (Knopf). A marvelous book—maybe we ought to refound America, using boatloads of convicts.

Patricia Schroeder is a Democratic congresswoman from Colorado.

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ROGER SCRUTON

Sometimes a truly interesting writer is not credited with the insights which others borrow from him—such was E. F. Benson, whose *How We Are* (1932) is an immortal classic of social analysis, beautifully and imaginatively written, and a penetrating study of Europe in decline. Among books published in English this year, I have been particularly impressed by Françoise Thom's *Newspeak*, a study of Communist language, issued by The Claridge Press, 43 Queen's Gardens, London WC2. Few books, to my knowledge, so effectively give the lie to Soviet propaganda, in both its old and new, Gorbastic, versions. In addition, I have been much impressed by Alain Besançon's study of Liberation Theology—*La Confusion des Langues* (Calmann-Levy, Paris)—and by David Pryce-Jones's study of Arab politics, *The Closed Circle* (Harper & Row).

Roger Scruton is professor of aesthetics at the University of London and editor of the conservative quarterly, the Salisbury Review. *Among his books are* Sexual Desire *(The Free Press),* Untimely Tracts *(St. Martin's Press), and* Fortnight's Anger *(Carcanet Press).*

JULIAN L. SIMON

In the minds of psychologists, I think, William James has just about displaced Sigmund Freud from the position of best psychologist ever. His *Varieties of Religious Experience* defies comparison with anything else. The last chapter can be read as an independent work. And his tolerance and pluralistic approach to philosophy put him in the next rank after David Hume.

Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty* is still his masterpiece. It foreshadows not only much of his own later work but also much of the work of many others on a variety of subjects (variety itself being one of those subjects).

Orthodox Jews read the first few awesome paragraphs of Genesis soon after the beginning of every Jewish year. The rest of us could follow them with profit. Elevation of the human spirit is guaranteed.

Don Aslett's book on house-cleaning is not only a marvelous how-to-do-it, but its lessons—about junk, and about letting the chemicals work while you do something else, for example—are also wonderful guidance for other areas of our lives.

Hashim Khan's book about squash is fun to read even if you never touch a racquet, partly because of the uproariously funny accent that is transcribed by Khan's editor.

Julian L. Simon is a professor at the University of Maryland's College of Business and Management. His most recent book is The Economic Consequences of Immigration *(Basil Blackwell).*

TOM TARZIAN

Did You Ever See a Dream Walking? by William F. Buckley, Jr. Compiled two decades ago by one of the founding fathers of the movement, this book remains the most comprehensive and readable chrestomathy of conservative thought.

The Practice of Management, by Peter Drucker. Of the many masterpieces this unsurpassed student of American business has written, this is the best.

Wealth and Poverty, by George Gilder. An elegantly written explication of *homo economicus*. The book that ushered in the Reagan boom.

Modern Times, by Paul Johnson. All the old conservative truths about the errancies of this century can be found here. It is what our conservative Republican fathers and mothers thought, but in better, more readable prose.

Competitive Advantage, by Michael E. Porter. The finest examination of the elements of success in business that I know of.

The Liberal Crack-Up, by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. I know the editor-in-chief-for-life insists that this is a piece of political analysis, explaining how the Liberals came upon such hard times; but for me it has always been a series of demonstrations on how conservatives can profoundly annoy Liberals across a whole range of issues. It is a how-to book on provocation.

Tom Tarzian is chairman and chief executive of Sarkes Tarzian, Inc. in Bloomington, Indiana.

RICHARD THORNBURGH

Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great*. A helpful aid to understanding the Russian (and sometimes even the Soviet) mentality.

Henry Adams, *Democracy*. Still the best book ever about Washington, D.C., and the foibles of its denizens. A gem!

Paul Johnson, *Modern Times*. Weaves a broad tapestry out of the sometimes tangled threads of the twentieth century with only occasional snags.

Robert Caro, *The Power Broker*. The career of super-builder Robert Moses is the backdrop for some unique insights into twentieth-century urban politics. A "must" for anyone in, or aspiring to, public service.

Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. An outrageous guide to the hopes, fears, neuroses, and aspirations of the current generation of upwardly mobile Americans.

. . . and if I can add a sixth for those times of reading about America's favorite pastime—Joseph Reichler, *The Baseball Encyclopedia*.

Richard Thornburgh is the U.S. Attorney General.

KATHLEEN KENNEDY TOWNSEND

Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*—for those who have forgotten that leaders once fought at the head of their armies.

Life and Death in Shanghai, by Nien Cheng—one indomitable spirit in a world of thugs, bullies, and moral cretins.

The Long Loneliness, by Dorothy Day—a woman who found a way to remain a Catholic.

George Washington's *Collected Letters*—common dignity, uncommon courage.

The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats—"Because a fire was in my head."

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend is director of the Robert Kennedy Memorial and director of the Maryland Student Service Alliance at the Maryland Department of Education.

GEORGE WEIGEL

Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (Harper & Row): Jaroslav Pelikan's exposition of how the "image of Christ" has shaped, and been shaped by, different cultures is happily accessible to a general readership, to whom it should help introduce the sharp mind and elegant prose style of one of America's truly great scholars.

Men at Arms, Officers and Gentlemen, Unconditional Surrender [*The End of the Battle*, in the American edition] (Penguin): Mailer, Jones, Heller, Vonnegut? Forget it. Evelyn Waugh's trilogy is the finest fiction to come out of the Second World War. It's also, arguably, Waugh's masterwork. Give it to someone who thinks history is coming to an end.

Happy Days, Newspaper Days, Heathen Days (Knopf): we seem to be into trinities here. Well, good: H. L. Mencken's memoirs are his most enduring writing, and vindicate Alistair Cooke's judgment of Mencken as a great American humorist in the tradition of Mark Twain.

Center Game (Bantam Books): Tired of high-tech thrillers which read like fictional glosses on *Jane's Fighting Ships*? Try Robert Andrews's sparkling first novel of double-dealing at the CIA, the KGB, the White House, the Kremlin, and a great burger-and-brew joint in the wilds of northern Virginia.

Total Baseball (Warner Books): essential reading for the Four Awful Months between the World Series and spring training, John Thorn and Pete Palmer's monster encyclopedia will introduce your wife, husband, and/or children to the higher altitudes of statistical theory while teaching them a lot of American history in the process.

George Weigel, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, is author, most recently, of Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy *(Paulist Press).*

WILLIAM WHITWORTH

"To amass military power without regard to our economic capacity would be to defend ourselves against one kind of disaster by inviting another."

"I'm damned tired of Air Force sales programs."

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft for those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

"In [Senator Knowland's] case, there seems to be no final answer to the question 'How stupid can you get?' "

"War today is unthinkable."

The Old Guard Republican desire to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance, labor laws, and farm programs is the dream of a "splinter group"—"their number is negligible and they are stupid."

"What would we do with a large Army if we had it? Where would we put it?"

Who said those things? Paul Kennedy? J. William Fulbright? Robert Kennedy? Adlai Stevenson? No, the speaker in each case was Dwight D. Eisenhower, the last President who understood foreign affairs, who was determined and able to hold federal spending down, and who could stand up to hawks in the Pentagon and in both parties. These quotes, and many other interesting ones, are available in *Eisenhower*, Stephen E. Ambrose's fine biography.

William Whitworth is the editor of the Atlantic Monthly. □

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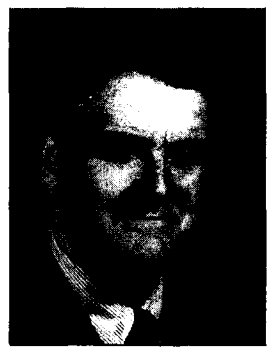
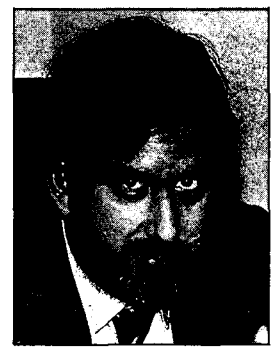

Warren Brookes

Victor Gold


Michael Ledeen

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Do the sleep-inducing sonorities of today's lecture circuit habitues have your organizations nodding off into their desserts? Between the breathless giggles of old Miss Americas and the nasal drone of yesteryear's mid-level government appointees, too many people exist with too little to say. Next meeting, for a refreshing change of pace, try The American Spectator Speaker's Bureau. No murmuring blabber, just some of the most well-informed, intelligent, interesting people today, including:

- Kenneth Adelman, President Reagan's top arms control adviser from 1983 to 1987, on topics such as the future of arms control, an insider's account of the INF treaty, his travel with Reagan to three summits, and his days at the United Nations with Jeane Kirkpatrick.
- Warren Brookes, award-winning political-economics columnist on what really influences the economic cycle, his studies into various hoaxes from Dukakis's "Massachusetts Miracle" to the Acid Rain scare, and why the media-types dedicate their efforts to preserving the "status-quo."
- Victor Gold, the *Spectator*'s national correspondent and co-author of President Bush's auto-biography, *Looking Forward*, on his insider status with Barry Goldwater, Spiro Agnew, and of course George Bush; media treatment of Bush over the last decade, and Bush's own estimate of our national media.
- Michael Ledeen, successful diplomat and adviser to the highest officials in Washington, on his prominent role in *l'affaire* "Iran-Contra," the future of the Soviet Empire, the worldwide "terror network," and "Good and Evil in the Media."
- R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., author of *The Liberal Crack-up* and TAS's monthly "Continuing Crisis" column, draws upon his observations to address the "Continuing Crisis of Domestic Policy," the "Continuing Crisis in the Third World," the "Continuing Crisis in American Social Policy," plus, of course, the "Continuing Crisis of Conservatives and Liberals."

With views and ideas not crushed to boring blandness by an Inside-the-Beltway mentality, these five provide a refreshing and unique perspective on the men, women and ideas shaping tomorrow's America today. Rather than wasting your group's money, and your members' time, with the inanities of today's regular speakers, hire the extraordinary: The American Spectator Speaker's Bureau.

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Not Just Another Bunch of Pretty Faces

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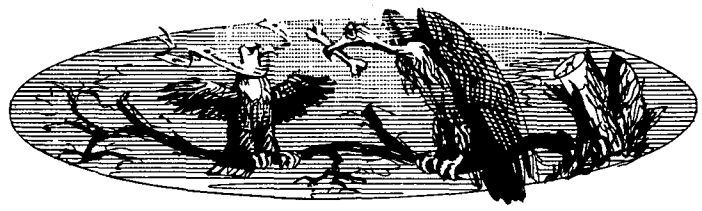

POINT DOOM

by Benjamin J. Stein

Point Dume, Malibu

The morning after Labor Day, and there was absolutely no energy at all in the air. It was foggy out over Santa Monica Bay. It looked as if a huge cloud had moved in at the bottom of my back yard, past the last palm tree. There was so little power in the area that I did not even have my usual morning panic attack. It was a perfect, quiet day for writing. However, that empty feeling in the air was scaring me, so I decided I had better go into town. There's something terrifying about Malibu at times, and this morning was one of those times.

Lunch at La Scala with my two darling pals Marci and Darci. Marci looks like the young Kim Novak. She's tall and blond and blue-eyed and twenty-six. Darci is shorter, with perfect cheerleader's features and blue-green eyes. She's also twenty-six. The main difference between them today, however, is that Marci is in love.

"It's like a fairy tale," she said as she ate her rigatoni. "I just got back from a four-day weekend in Maui. We flew there first class on United to Oahu, and then Norris rented a private plane for us and took us to Maui. It was perfect."

"Sounds perfect," I said.

"The only problem was that I drank a little the night before the trip, and then I had to get ready in a hurry and didn't have time for breakfast. So as soon as I got into the limo that Norris sent over, and as soon as I had the first few sips of champagne, I felt sick. Then, when we got onto the plane to Maui, I just ran to the bathroom, and I fainted, and then I threw up. And I would say that for maybe half of the trip, I was fainting and throwing up. I didn't even know where I was. Sweat was pouring off me. I just wanted them to throw me out the window and let me die."

"Very romantic."

"Well, that's the perfect part. Norrie didn't mind at all. He's from Brazil, and his father was a really famous surgeon down there, and he didn't get upset at all that I was sick. He just held my hand and told me it would be all right. I mean, the guy is by far the hottest producer in all of Brazil, from what I hear, and he was totally taking care of me, who can't make five hundred dollars a week, take-home, like I was Victoria Principal or something great."

"He sounds dreamy," Darci said.

"It's amazing," Marci agreed. "I met him at a party at David Sonnenbaum's house, and he's one of David's biggest clients at ICM, and he had shoulder length blond hair, which is apparently really rare in Brazil, and he showed up in an Aston-Martin, and normally, a guy like that, with a huge Rolex, is the kind of guy who you'd think would be a scammer. Right, Ben?"

"That's certainly what I'd say," I agreed.

"But he's the most incredibly kind, caring man I've ever met. He owns this huge plantation in the Amazon jungle, and he's clearing the land to graze cattle, and he's really good to these Indians who live there, and he's a totally amazingly kind guy. And he has a chain of discos in Buenos Aires and in Montevideo and in Rio and he also produces, well, sort of like action pictures, only they have a lot of sex in them, and you'd think he was a real low-life, right?"

"Sounds like it to me," Darci said.

"But he only does those things to gain credibility to make really sensitive, caring movies. Like he wants to do one about an advertising executive who decides that he's Jesus and makes ads about the Golden Rule, only it turns out he's insane.

"Anyway, so we got to Maui and I'm shivering and throwing up, and we go to the hotel, and I sleep for about six hours, and I'm fine, and I'm slamming vodka and tonic and Long Islanders for the rest of the weekend, feeling totally and completely great. And most of the day, we just lie in these lounge chairs and drink and they bring us shrimp and lobster. I think there are a lot of drug people there though," Marci added. "Because there are lots of people who look like derelicts wearing great big gold Rolexes, and that's always a clue."

"Always," I said.

"But we're in love, and he's building a huge house in Brentwood right down the street from your pal Norman Lear, and we've already named our first five kids, and we also want to have seven dogs, all Weimaraners, and that's just how great it is. Meanwhile, Darci, how are you?"

"I'm totally mad at my Mom, because she gave this guy who's been hounding me my new phone number, and I think he's dangerous. He spent a year in jail for selling cocaine, and I think he's a psycho.

"What kind of watch did he wear?" Marci asked.

Two p.m. A meeting at a huge house in Bel Air with a man named Sally B. A *man*. Sally B. is ninety years old. He is paralyzed from the waist down. The result of a relatively minor surgical procedure at Cedars that was bungled. Sally B. came from the South Side of Chicago to downtown Chicago. He owned a company that cleaned factories and office buildings. From that, he got into owning a chain of parking lots and funeral homes. From that, he miraculously managed to own four of the biggest casino-hotels in Las Vegas and three good-sized ones in Havana before Castro ruined everything.

Sally B. had seen some of my articles on financial misconduct. He had his lawyer call me to invite me to meet him. Sally B. believes that in his whole life, he has never seen anyone behaving as questionably as a certain Michael Dingman, CEO of a major industrial company called Henley, based in San Diego. Sally B. wanted to talk to me about Mr. Dingman.

Sally B.'s house was not all that large. Blenheim Palace is far larger, and so is Versailles. An unbelievably beautiful black woman answered the door in a nurse's uniform unbuttoned to the fourth button and in high heels. She led me silently into a study where Sally B. and his lawyer awaited.

"You look like an honest man," Sally B. said. "I want you to help me sue Mike Dingman to make him pay for the way he's been mistreating us stockholders. I don't care how much it costs or if I get a penny. I just want him to know he can't get away with it."

"The problem," I said, "is that he can get away with it. He's played twenty different kinds of scammy games as I see it, and he's getting to be a billionaire fast while the stock is in the toilet. But if you sue him, he'll use the stock-

Benjamin J. Stein is a writer and producer in Hollywood.

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holders' money to fight you and wear you down, and even if you do get a judgment, he'll just go out and do it again, and use the stockholders' money to defend himself again. It'll take an act of Congress to get that guy, and don't hold your breath for that."

We talked about other horrible people, and then about Columbia Savings and Loan, an empire waiting to crumble, in my humble opinion, and then Sally B. began to reminisce about how his own empire in Vegas was taken away from him.

It all had to do with certain other people from Chicago who came out of the jukebox business and had friends in Kansas City and Cleveland, and played various tricks involving a justice of the Supreme Court and rigging stock prices and threatening the lives of people's wives and children.

"When I was in Vegas in the sixties, it was a very honorable, honest place," Sally B. said. "I think you would have liked it a lot. But it changed, and people actually started skimming from the casino tables by the millions," he added.

"You're kidding. Skimming? In Las Vegas?"

"Yes," he said to me. "And bad people. I vividly recall the day I learned that the pressure of running the Sands or maybe it was the Flamingo, I'm not really sure which, got to be too big, and all of a sudden, there was no way that the son of my closest friend could put up with the headaches of running a business, and he was found dead with two bullets in his head. Suicide."

"Two bullets? In his head?"

"Yes," Sally B. said, nodding sadly. "The guy had iron nerves. Suicide. His wife is still a lovely woman. Are you married?"

In the living room off the study, the black nurse glided silently back and forth in her high heels. Occasionally she looked over and smiled. Twice, an attractive white woman walked through the living room in pedal pushers and high-heeled backless pumps.

"I'd like to consult with you about some of my other holdings," Sally B. said. "Could you be available?"

"I don't know," I said. "I get nervous talking about other people's money. I'll think about it."

The lawyer and the black nurse let me out. The nurse wore a pin that said her name and "CCRN."

"What does that mean?" I asked.

"It means I am registered as a critical care nurse," she said. "For people who need care very critically."

"Sally liked you," the lawyer said. "Come back at any time."

I drove to our house in the Hollywood Hills. It used to amaze me that people had houses both at the beach and in town. Not anymore. All it takes is working yourself sick. No big thing.

I played with the dogs for a few hours until my wife returned from the park with our son. We swam with him in the pool, which my wife likes to keep at an even hundred degrees. We played "Motorboat" and "Throw Tommy to Mommy" (or Daddy). I complained to my wife about our bills at the vet and at Tiffany. She told me I was a critical maniac, but then we laughed and reminisced about Yale, so that was all right.

Dinner at Morton's with my pal Michael Chinich and his son, my pal Jordan. Jordan has just turned sixteen and it's his birthday and I wanted him to have fun. He loves Morton's. We sat at the little table by the runway and watched the people come in. Tamara Asseyev. Producer. Sherry Lansing. Producer. John Goldwyn and Alan Ladd, Jr. Studio executives. Colleen Camp. Movie star. Menachem Golan. Shtarker. The place was lively, jumping, cheerful.

At exactly eight o'clock, the door opened and Marvin and Barbara Davis appeared. Marvin looked as if he had lost quite a lot of weight. With them was someone whom I guess to be either family or the accountant.

A hush fell over the room as Marvin and Barbara went over to talk to Allen and Marilyn Bergman, star song-

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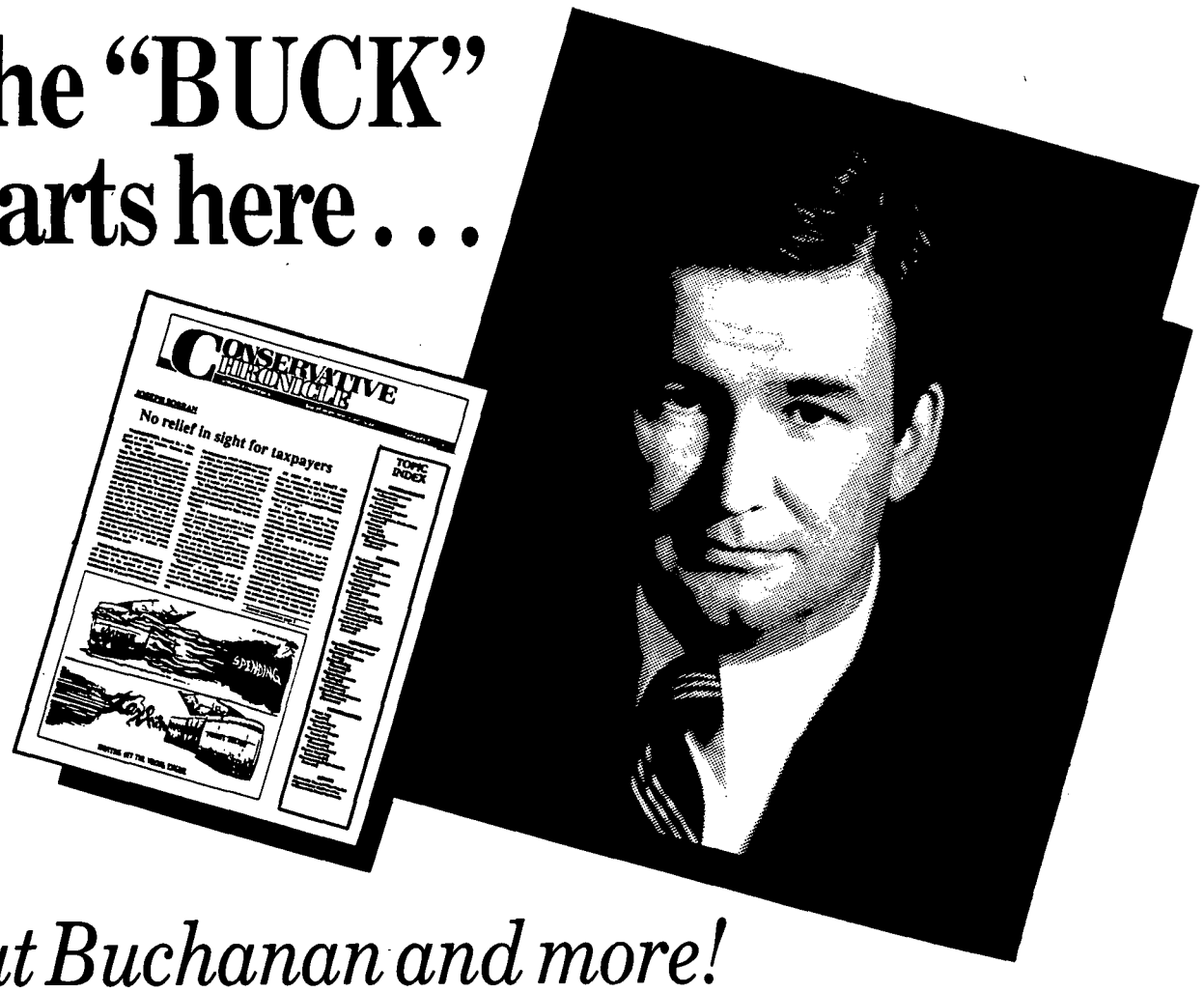

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writers. In the temple of Mammon, Mammon himself had appeared. We all talked about what we would do if we were as rich as Marvin, and what we would do better, and then we talked about United Airlines, and then about the food. You don't see that many beautiful girls at Morton's on power nights. The players, the ones with the big dollar, bring their wives to Morton's. Usually.

I promised Jordan that when he bought a car for his birthday, I would help him buy a C.D. player for it. Then we all shook hands out in the parking lot and thanked each other and I went on my way.

Back at Point Dume, there was that same empty feeling in the air. I put on analyses of the President's drug speech on the TVs in the living room and in the bedroom. A number of people I know from Washington were sitting around a table talking about modalities. Suddenly, as I lay in bed, I heard a huge crash. It sounded as if it came from the long driveway next to my house. Strange people live at the end of that driveway, as far as I can tell. At any rate, someone lives there who has visitors all night long, who has visitors who zoom up to the house, run inside, come running out after five minutes saying, "Wow, that's righteous stuff" and "Wow, I feel so high," and zoom off. Anyway, I heard and felt the crash in the alley belonging to the late-night hosts. So I ran out of my front door in my pajamas to investigate.

Tragedy. A white Chevrolet from the early 1970s was crashed into one of my live oak trees. It was torn up like a tuna fish can. No engine hood, no windshield except slivers, squashed like an accordion. At the wheel was a young man who looked terrible.

I ran inside and called 911. I reported the accident and said we needed an ambulance immediately.

That was about midnight. A woman promised that help was on the way.

I ran back outside. My next door neighbor, a lovely woman named Susan, an emergency room nurse from Wales, was standing barefoot in a bathrobe in a rubble of broken glass. She was holding the hand of the driver, who was moaning and trying to talk. "You'll be all right," she said. "Can you feel my hand? Can you feel your foot? Can you hear me? Squeeze my hand if you can hear me."

I started to come over to her. "If blood makes you upset, you'd better stay a little back," she said. On the asphalt next to the front door was a puddle of blood as thick as barbecue sauce. It was the size of a bathroom rug.

There is a fire station on Point Dume, but there was no sign of the paramedics. I ran inside and called again. By this time it was about ten after midnight. Again, help was promised. I ran back outside. The nurse was still there, soothing, helping. Her housemate brought her slippers. "I think his left leg is just about decapitated," someone said.

I ran back inside to call 911 again and to get a blanket. By the time I got back outside, the paramedics were there. They relieved Susan, who came over next to me and told me she thought the young man was in shock. "He stopped talking, and he'd lost a lot of blood. A lot of blood."

For almost an hour, sheriffs and paramedics worked with a generator and various tools to cut the man out of his crumpled up heap. "He reeked of alcohol," the nurse said. "I wonder why he was turning into that alley so fast."

I told a deputy about when I had heard the crash and what I thought of neighborhood drug conditions generally. He showed no interest whatsoever. I'll have to tell Bill Bennett about this little skirmish in the war on drugs.

Just as the sheriffs and paramedics were getting the man out of the car and laying him on a gurney, another neighbor came sidling out of his house. "I know you," he said. "You used to work for Norman Lear when I was working for Dick Clark."

"Right," I said.

"I used to do 'Bloopers and Blunders.' "

Over on the street, not fifteen feet away, a paramedic was lying stomach down on the ground trying to intubate the kid who had been in the car. Another paramedic was trying to jab a needle into the kid's arm.

"Goddamn," the paramedic said, "it's so dark I can't find a vein."

Another paramedic started to shine a halogen beam on the victim's elbow. "Damn," the first paramedic said, "this guy has no pulse at all. That's why I can't find a vein."

"I have a pilot for a sitcom at CBS," my neighbor said. "It's my first one without Dick Clark, and I really think it's going to work."

"I hope so for your sake," I said. "My friend Al Burton has the new Lassie, and that's going to make him a very happy guy."

"This man's got to get out of here right away," a paramedic said. A moment later, we could hear and see a helicopter landing in the pitch darkness at the parking lot of the Mayfair, a few hundred yards down the road. The paramedics put the man into an ambulance and took him down the road. A moment later, we could see the helicopter taking off.

"Where's he going?" I asked a deputy.

"Westlake Hospital," the man said, "but I think he's already gone. I don't think he made it."

I went inside to get my camera to take a photo of the car. As I raised my camera, a tall thin deputy said that I was not allowed to take pictures of accidents.

"Why?"

"I don't know the rationale," the deputy said. "It's just Sheriff's Department policy. There'll be pictures in the paper."

"I hear Lassie has cleared over a hundred and sixty stations," my neighbor said. "First-run syndication? Right?"

"Right," I said.

I watched the deputies measuring tread marks and skid marks. The man was clearly killed while trying to make a very much too fast turn off the street down the alley next to my house. The only people who live down that alley are the people who have the frequent nocturnal visitors. Maybe I'll send a letter to the County Council.

About 2:00 a.m., I went inside to go to sleep. Before I got under the covers I read from a book that told me that when I was upset I must just think that feelings come and feelings go, and I'd be all right. Also to just be still and not feel a thing and then go on.

I flipped on the TV to a cable channel. There was an X-rated version of Romeo and Juliet. A director with a thick New York accent was telling a nude woman actress that she apparently wanted to ". . . be the first actress in history to make it with both Romeo and Juliet."

Just before I fell asleep, I could hear the neighbor's German shepherd barking. He's the star of a big sitcom hit called "Night Court" and I guess he feels he needs the dog for protection here in Malibu. □

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EMINENTOES

AIR AMERICA'S FLYBOYS

by David Brock

When Ivar Gram asked one of his fellow ex-pilots if the small red insignia on his white polo shirt was a marijuana leaf, the joke did not go down well. "Canadian maple leaf," the man answered gruffly and then walked off. This is not to say that the group of 300 or so aging air vets gathered for an Air America reunion at a suburban Virginia Holiday Inn was humorless. It's just that, well, there are a few subjects about which they're a bit defensive, and involvement with drugs tops the list.

In fact, it was frustration with their hopelessly defensive posture against all the negative attention directed at them by Congress and the press that led the Air America men to start the Air America Club in 1984. As incoming president Jerry McEntee, an ex-helicopter pilot from New York, puts it: "We were there, Charlie. We know what happened, our detractors don't. We want to put the record straight."

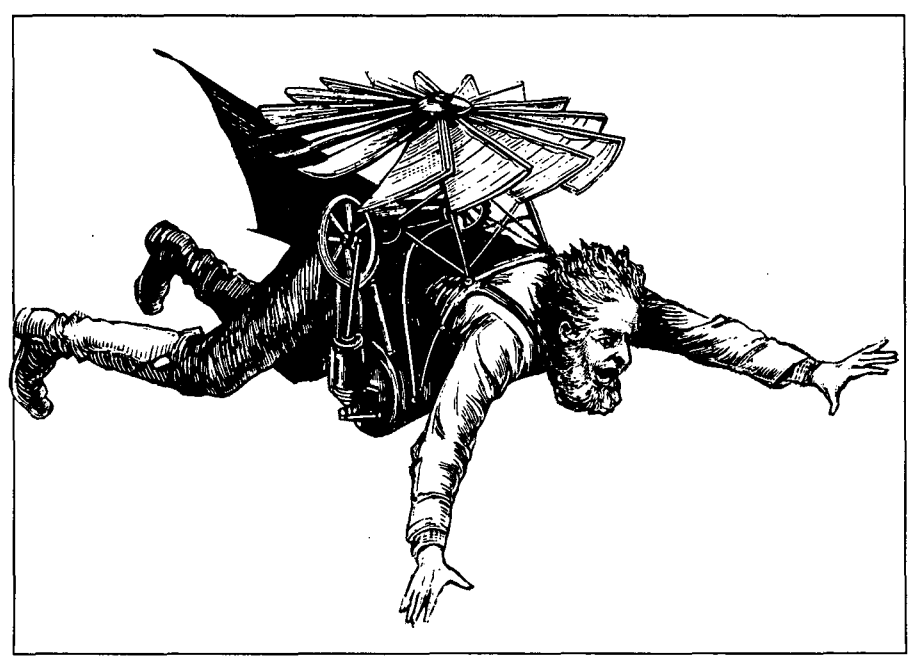
Where they were was Asia, pilots and crew for the CIA's airline. Formed forty years ago in October, Air America was one of the several companies that were wholly owned by the agency but did business under commercial guise. The airline was founded privately by Gen. Claire L. Chennault, of "Flying Tigers" fame, and Whiting Willauer, a naval intelligence expert, with the mission of supplying Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists in China. It was soon sold to the CIA, which over the next thirty years used the airline ("the most shot-at in the world") to haul freight, passengers, weapons, and supplies to anti-Communist armies in China, Korea, and Vietnam.

Many of the men suspected a CIA link in the 1960s when Air America's operations grew proportionately with the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but even among themselves they referred to the agency as merely "the customer." As late as 1970, George A. Doole, Jr., the legendary CIA agent and Air America chief executive, told a reporter: "If someone out there is behind this, we don't know about it."

The covert requirements of the enterprise have come back to haunt the club in its attempt to counter what McEntee calls the "trite innuendoes and outright lies" that characterize so many media portrayals of the CIA flyboys. For example, the following from a recent interview in the *San Francisco Chronicle* with Dan Melnick, producer of the forthcoming Carolco film *Air America*, starring Mel Gibson: "It's a funny, biting action comedy about something I care about. . . . The pilots have been accused of running drugs, opium and heroin from Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle to pay for the clandestine war in Laos. . . . Air America was a CIA front. They were using Air America as a way of financing the war Congress never made an appropriation for."

One can expect *Air America* to do for the 5,000 or so Air America vets precisely what *Platoon* did for Vietnam veterans: kick them in the teeth. But the bad rap comes not only from the tendentious restaging of Vietnam in Hollywood, but also from Air America's connection with the Reagan effort to beat back Communism in Central America.

Air America's indirect links to Iran-contras—Gen. Richard V. Secord was an alum, along with lesser figures like Eugene Hasenfus, the cargo handler captured by the Sandinistas after the crash of a private arms-laden plane, and William Cooper, a pilot who died in that crash—soon had groups like the crazed Christic Institute claiming that a "secret team" of ex-military and ex-CIA types had been running U.S. foreign policy for the past twenty-five years, financing their operations through shady dealings, with a wink and a nod from Langley. (During the sixties, of course, there was plenty of official covert operations money around for just about anything the CIA wanted to do.) It was often suggested that Air America in fact had never been disbanded, that it was still flying in Central America. Clyde Carter was the last president of the airline, presiding from the time of the last operation—the evacuation of U.S. troops from Saigon in April 1975—until the lights went out in 1979 after a three-year liquidation period. He set me straight on the point: "The company was formally disbanded on April 1, 1976. I dropped off the papers myself in Dover, Delaware, on the way to visit my mother-in-law in New York. And I kept copies."



But other myths are more difficult to debunk. "With Vietnam, you didn't have one ten-year war. You had ten one-year wars, and everybody's experience was different," says Leon LaShomb, a diminutive Texan who has devoted his retirement to chronicling Air America's history. "You have the same problem with Air America. Nobody knows the *whole* story." LaShomb is working with the CIA to compile a definitive list of those who actually worked for the company. Even that will take years, he figures, and when it is completed, it will be added to the collection of declassified company documents in new archives at the University of Texas at Dallas, where there is also a 500-pound bronze plaque bearing the names of the 254 men who died on Air America missions.[1] "In the archives, we'll have the facts, not somebody's interpretation," says LaShomb.

Undoing contrary interpretations, however, is not going to be easy for this group. For one thing, like any crowd of red-blooded Americans from places like Clearwater, Florida, they despise the adversarial sophists in the media. An independent (and sympathetic) filmmaker, who has taken pains to point out that his production is in no way related to Carolco, hung a sign-up sheet outside the hospitality suite, seeking to schedule weekend interviews. Only one person, a Mr. Jeffreys, complied. The rest were too busy filming each other with shoulder-held videocams, remarking on how tasty the Holiday Inn stuffed chicken breast was, and arguing about whether the fat queen with the ponytail was the maitre d' or some poor soul's son. When asked to spell the Laotian province of Luang Prabang, ex-pilot Jack Berg tells me: "In your ear." It was one of the more polite kiss-offs of the weekend.

Another, and opposite, problem is getting the men to shut up. Inevitably,

David Brock is a senior editor of Insight.

[1]This is a sore spot with many of Air America's vets. Their dead were excluded from the Vietnam War Memorial in the capital because they were not in the military. Neither were they officially CIA. And so their sacrifices go unrecognized.

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their embellished war stories do not jibe with the straight-arrow image the club's honchos want to project. "I tell them we've got to stop telling stories," says McEntee, who is scrupulously tight-lipped about his own exploits. (One slightly sloshed woman offers to tell me *all* about McEntee, but when tracked down later, she demurs.) But many of the men, looking now like a convention of retired insurance salesmen, complete with badly done hair transplants, clearly relish the derring-do days of old, or at least the mystique surrounding them, and they *like* to talk, with each other anyway. For instance, Jack Berg and Jack Rife, a former fixed wing pilot, exchange angry words about who is going to get to tell of the time a Japanese photographer showed up in a Bangkok strip joint and snapped some pictures of Tony Darusi bussing the navel of a stark-naked belly-dancer. Somehow, the photos wound up in the hands of Mrs. Darusi, who did not take them in stride.

Such stories are of no great moment. Ironically, the accounts more damaging to Air America's reputation often come from people who have never worked for it (thus the importance of LaShomb's employee list). Last year, for example, Richard Brenneke told a federal judge in Denver that George Bush flew secretly to Paris in October 1980 and agreed to pay $40 million for delaying the release of American hostages until after election day. The accusation made the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*. Brenneke claimed to have been an 18-year Air America employee; the CIA took the unprecedented action of revealing that the man had never been one.

Most of the fantastic accounts revolve around common themes: that the pilots were soldiers of fortune, involved in the enterprise for no higher reasons than cash, adventure, and cheap women; that they napalmed innocent civilians and collected dead or near-dead Americans for pay; and that Air America supported the drug trade in Southeast Asia, using the money to fund unauthorized covert operations.

The men, most of whom came to the company from the military or commercial airlines, will vouch for having been well-paid, with pilots making about $1,000 a week in the late 1960s, much of it tax-free. There were plenty of opportunities to make money on the side, too. Berg says one pilot picked up $20,000 by flying several hundred pounds of matches into Dien Bien Phu during a match shortage. But they dismiss any suggestion of napalming, making fat fees for rescues, or trading in corpses. "They say we got $10,000 a pop for picking up downed pilots," says McEntee. "We never got paid for a single one. We actually lost money when we did."

Ask Debbie Pirkle about the men's motives. She has come to the reunion from Florida, with her two children. "We moved to Thailand in October 1966 with Air America. My husband was a helicopter maintenance crew chief. The men never had any doubts that what they were doing was working for their government, and what they were doing was right. . . . In August 1967, my husband was killed in a helicopter landing. The helipad had been overrun during the night in Luang Prabang by the Pathet Lao. At first nobody would tell me what happened, just that he was killed, but I've pieced it together. I brought the children so they could meet some of his friends, to help add something to who their father was."

As to the drug-running charges, there are more authoritative sources. In 1976, the final report of the Senate select committee headed by Frank Church that investigated U.S. intelligence activities endorsed the conclusions of an inspector general's report, which found "no evidence that the Agency or any senior officer of the Agency, has ever sanctioned or supported drug trafficking as a matter of policy. Also, we found not the slightest suspicion, much less evidence, that any Agency officer, staff or contract, has ever been involved in the drug business."

The Church committee, of course, had not spoken with Jack Rife about the shoe box caper. Rife was with Air America, based in Bangkok, from 1964 to 1968. An acquaintance, Maurice Cavaleri, an ex-medical student from France who moved to Laos and opened the Constellation Hotel (guests called it the Constipation), once asked Rife for a favor. Would he carry a shoe box from Vientiane to Bangkok and deliver it to Cavaleri's children? The next Air America flight out, with Rife in the cockpit, had aboard the U.S. ambassador to Thailand, the chief of staff of the U.S. Army, and Cavaleri's shoe box. After handing over the box and collecting $2,000, Rife inquired about its contents. "A box full of checks," he was told, presumably collected in Cavaleri's drug operation.

"One time he showed me a smuggler's belt and tried to get me to do it," Keith Vasconcellos, an Air America alum who now flies for TWA, says of Cavaleri. "The route was Vientiane to Saigon to Hong Kong to San Francisco. But I wouldn't do it, and I don't know anybody who ever had anything to do with drugs." Characters like Rife, in fact, did not last long at Air America. Shortly after his trip, he says he was fired by a CIA official. Yet stories like his, from men of brief affiliation with the airline and whose testimony is of questionable veracity to boot, form the soft core of the left's case against Air America. □

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AMONG THE INTELLECTUALOIDS

HOMER AND HIS PUBLISHERS

by Joe Queenan

Most people think that when Homer finished writing *The Iliad*, publishing houses were breaking down the door to get first crack at it. Nothing could be further from the truth: when Homer put the finishing touches on his *opus magnum*, he was just another blind Greek poet who had to go out and market his work like everybody else. This was no piece of cake, given that the major publishing houses were located in downtown Athens, thousands of miles away from Homer's home in Asia Minor. But what posed even more of a problem was the unwieldy nature of the work itself. *The Iliad*, it will be remembered, was essentially a performance piece, existing in no written form. This meant that even before Homer could begin lining up buyers for his word-of-mouth epic, he first had to hire someone to sit down and memorize *The Iliad* as it was recited, and then go to Athens to repeat sample chapters to prospective publishers. Which he did. Six months later, the man carrying Homer's manuscript inside his skull returned with a gag in his mouth and a graphite shard around his neck reading:

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HISTORIES WILL BE
RETURNED UNLISTENED TO.

Undeterred, Homer visited a local oracle to obtain a list of publishing houses which would accept submissions from unknown writers, then sent his representative out again. But the results were uniformly discouraging:

Dear Applicant:

Due to an unusually tight epic market, we are not in a position to take on any new clients during this lunar phase. Good luck in the future.

or: Too negative.

or: No poetry.

Joe Queenan is a senior editor for Forbes.

There was also the problem of lost manuscripts. One of the oral historians Homer sent out drowned in the Aegean. A second had a concussion and forgot most of the important passages. Still another fell in with satyrs. And then there was the curious case of the messenger who disappeared for three years, then turned up at the local watering hole one afternoon with this message dangling from his soiled loincloth.

Dear Mister Homer:

Just a little advice. When submitting an oral version of your work, make sure that the person you hire to recite the poem is a sober citizen, and not the boozed-up wino who staggered in here yesterday, mumbled a few words about Aphrodite or some-such, and then passed out on the carpet just when it was starting to get interesting. Believe me, you're only shortchanging yourself when you hire screwballs like this clown.

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Realizing that he was getting nowhere fast, Homer at last took the advice of his friends and went out looking for an agent. But agents were hard to come by, and didn't come cheap:

Dear Homer:

Your work sounds fresh—refreshingly fresh—and I would be positively enthralled to read it. If I had more clients like you, I wouldn't have to charge a reading fee. But I don't, so I do. Let's say 879 drachmas for *The Iliad*, and another 500 for this second thing you've got in draft form. Or how about this: send me the first nine chapters of *The Iliad* and an outline of *The Odyssey*, and I'll quote you a combined price of 999 for the pair. Or if you want to send me either one of them in mime form, I could let you go for an even 500. Whatever suits you.

Infuriated by the suggestion that he should pay to have his work read, Homer began sending out sample chapters of *The Iliad* to small presses, employing one person to memorize each section. This led to hard feelings when he decided to rewrite the epic, cutting out Chapters 7, 9, and 23, all of which seemed turgid and flabby.

"One man's turgidity is another man's grubsteak," said the man who had worked as Chapter 23 for nine years, wandering all over the Hellenistic world rattling off his portion of *The Iliad* to any editor who cared to give him a listen. "I'll level with you, pal: this is the only thing I'm qualified to do. You cut me loose now, and I've had it. I'll never find another job."

Homer knew that this was true. In a society of goatherds, hoplites, seers, dramatists, petty tyrants, vineyard owners, philosophers, and slaves, it was pretty hard to break into the work force when all you could put on your résumé was: "Have spent the last nine years working as the twenty-third chapter of an unpublished word-of-mouth legend. Well-organized and detail-oriented." Nevertheless, money was tight, and Homer had no choice but to lay off the three chapters in question, promising to rehire them when things picked up—say around the fifth printing of *The Iliad II*. Three nights later, coming home from a party, the writer was set upon by a pack of thugs and beaten so badly that he went deaf, too. Though the charges were never proved, everyone knew it was the three unemployed chapters who'd done it, and several years later, when Homer got a few obols ahead of the game, he hired a pack of renegade demigods to flay the responsible parties.

Eventually, inevitably, Homer did find a publisher for *The Iliad*, with *The Odyssey* appearing shortly thereafter. Acclaim and prestige followed. Yet many people down through the ages have wondered why the great poet didn't write more books, why he decided to throw in the towel after only his second masterpiece. The truth is that Homer did not stop writing, but spent the last thirty years of his life preparing what he viewed as his definitive statement on the human condition. A trilogy it was, consisting of *The Hoi Ploy* (a thriller about a Greek plot to bribe all the poor people in Troy to murder Hector), *The Hoarse Trojan* (the heart-rending tale of Paris's brother, Marseille, who came down with laryngitis the night the Trojan Horse entered the city—the night he was on guard duty) and *Aunt Tigone*, a musical. Once again, he used the word-of-mouth technique (less paper), hiring one person to memorize the first chapter, another to memorize the second, and so on and so forth. After twenty-nine years, when he finally had all sixty-five chapters ready to go to Athens, he threw a huge party for the entire crew, many of whom had never met each other. At some point during the blowout, Chapter 18 (who was Chapter 6's ex-husband) had words with Chapter 6's current boyfriend (who didn't even work in Homer's fiction, but had a job in a shipyard) and a fight broke out, in which Chapter 14—an innocent bystander—was killed. The police came, rounded up suspects, and twelve chapters were detained. When Homer was a bit slow dipping into his pocket for the bail money, the detainees flew off the handle, proclaiming that they'd had it up to there, and were pulling out of the literature racket for good. Several went so far as to cut off their tongues. Whereupon Homer, now completely fed up with humanity, told the remaining chapters to forget about going to Athens, girded his loincloth more tightly about him (there is some dispute concerning this), and quietly retired. □

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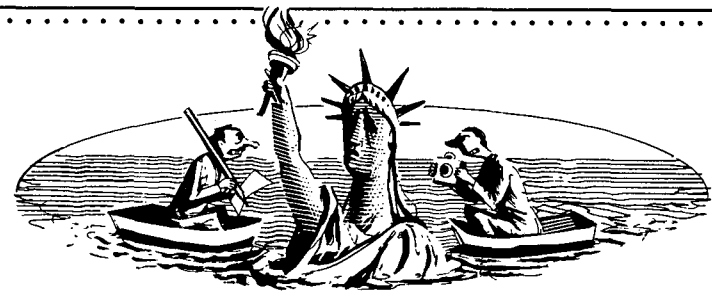


PRINTHEADS VS. PICTUREHEADS

by Terry Eastland

The latest journalistic treatment of Ronald Reagan is *The Acting President*, published by E. P. Dutton this past summer, with a huge first run of 75,000 copies. The book, which the flap copy touts as "a history of the Reagan administrations," merits comment for numerous reasons, not least of which is its authorship.

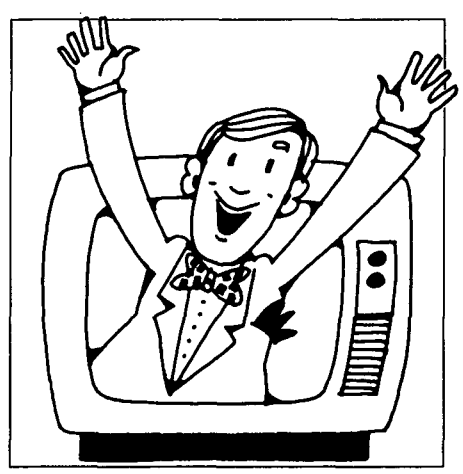
Bob Schieffer, the lead author, is the well-known chief Washington correspondent for CBS News. His co-author, Gary Paul Gates, is a former CBS reporter who has written books with Mike Wallace and Dan Rather, two other CBS journalists (I almost said "stars"). The fact that two television journalists have written a book (and I checked: they *did* write it) that aspires to some degree of seriousness has created a threshold problem for more than a few print journalists. I called a half dozen of that variety, all of whom covered the White House during the Reagan years. None of them had read the book; none intended to. "Just television," one scoffed.

That says a lot. Obviously, there's some rivalry between "printheads," as television types derisively call print journalists, as we learned last month from Fred Barnes, and "pictureheads," if I may coin a word. Printheads don't make half as much as pictureheads (and none will ever get paid a fraction of what Dan Rather or Diane Sawyer earns). Because pictureheads think they advance the news better than printheads, particularly in political campaigns, they see themselves as a kind of historical cutting edge. St. John may have written, "In the beginning was the word," but centuries later Goethe said, revising the disciple and presaging television, "In the beginning was the act." Pictureheads, in effect, side with Goethe and believe in the superiority of pictures over words. Printheads stay with the gospel writer (at least on this item) and believe in the superiority of the written word, looking down their noses at their rich and famous media cousins (though not at producers who pay them to go on "talk shows," but that's another story).

These are generalizations, I know, but they're helpful in understanding the print reaction to the book. If *The Acting President* had taken the form of a television series, a bunch of pictures, that would have been one thing. But it took the form of words, and, for many print journalists, nothing good in the way of words can come from television news types.

It is tempting to agree with this assessment. News on television (with the exception of MacNeil-Lehrer) has become harder and harder to take seriously, in part because it is harder and harder to take seriously as journalists some of the people who give us the news. CNN's Linda Ellerbee hawks Maxwell House coffee for big sums, and NBC's erstwhile sunrise newsreader Deborah Norville, who will soon replace Jane Pauley on the "Today" show, goes to Hawaii to counsel a major corporation on matters of advertising (with NBC's approval). Coffee drinkers, they are. Serious journalists, no way. Come to think of it, they're journalists only on the most generous definition.

Then there are the people once regarded, often well regarded, as "hard" news types who have evolved into entertainers. Consider, for example, the team of Sam Donaldson and Diane Sawyer,



the "stars" of ABC's new show "Prime Time Live." (Here the word precisely fits; it's worth noting that a major question on the program's second installment was whether Ms. Sawyer's earring, which fell off early on, would be reattached when the camera turned to Sam; answer: it was.) Or consider CBS's Connie Chung, who now has her own "Saturday Night With Connie Chung." On that show, Chung presides over the presentation of events "recreated" or even entirely made up. Earlier on Saturdays she wears her other hat as a CBS news anchor, at which time the viewer is supposed to assume that she is presiding over the presentation of real events. Yet such an assumption is open to question these days, no matter which network news show you tune in. This fall CBS has been accused of using fake battle footage from Afghanistan (in an award-winning broadcast in 1984). Earlier this year ABC did in fact fake footage of an alleged exchange between a U.S. diplomat and a Soviet agent. And in 1986 NBC showed pictures of an Italian cement factory and told viewers it was the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

To be sure, none of this means that one should automatically conclude that no one in television news is capable of writing a serious or important book. It is possible, if improbable. Indeed, one network reporter, defending to me the possibility of such a book, nonetheless broke off in mid-sentence to say: "Now if you asked me to point to one, I'd have to think about it a minute." Eventually, we came up with David Brinkley's recent offering, *Washington Goes to War.*

These observations constitute the necessary prologue to a consideration of *The Acting President*. Plainly, one cannot dismiss the book purely on account of its authors' professional orientation. Indeed, the very fact that the authors, the likable Schieffer in particular, who sometimes anchors the news for CBS, have attempted to write a book about the presidency, something not normally done by today's television journalists, counts in their favor. It's a project that's definitely worthier than, say, Chung's "Saturday Night" venture. Still, when judged as any book of this kind should be—on its merits—*The Acting President* is not a good book.

To begin with, the writing is for the most part pedestrian ("In Washington, policy is made by managing the continual compromises that must be struck between the executive and legislative branches") and marred by obvious factual errors. (The supply-side movement did not aim to cut "business taxes," but business tax *rates*—and also personal income tax rates. And it is not the attorney general but a special court that appoints independent counsels.)

The book also contains little "news." It does provide the first complete account of Dan Rather's famous interview with George Bush in which Bush tore after Rather in order to dispel his "wimp" image. (Since this happened on CBS, its inclusion comes as no surprise.) And it produces an actual copy of the late 1980 memo whereby Jim Baker appeared to "divide" up duties with Ed Meese, a memo that effectively empowered Baker at Meese's expense. But 90 percent of the book is old stuff. Anyone familiar with news accounts of Reagan from the past decade, or with Lou Cannon's *Reagan* (1982), Laurence Barrett's *Gambling With History* (1983), and Jane Mayer and Doyle McManus's *Landslide* (1988) will find *The Acting President* a largely derivative work.

Schieffer and Gates do acknowledge their reliance on those and other Reagan books, as well as on newspaper and magazine articles. (Interestingly, they do not say whether they reviewed television news of the past decade.) Finally, they mention that they have conducted "scores of interviews." But *The Acting President* has no footnotes, a mistake in a work purporting to be a "history of the Reagan administrations."

I asked Schieffer about the lack of

Terry Eastland is resident scholar at the National Legal Center for the Public Interest in Washington, D.C. He is writing a book about the lessons for conservative government to be drawn from the Reagan and Bush years.

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notes. "Looking back," he said, "I wished we had put them in." To his credit, he wanted notes. The publisher didn't, on grounds that notes would make the book too academic—i.e., less marketable. But *Reagan* and *Landslide* had notes and did fine in the marketplace. Notes are essential in a book of this kind because they provide students of the Reagan years the kind of documentation necessary for comparison and further inquiry. Not incidentally, notes also indicate the kind of work the authors themselves have done.

The book's most serious flaw lies in its approach to the Reagan presidency. The authors of *The Acting President* made no effort to transcend the parochial world of Washington journalism, print or picture, fascinated as so much of it daily is with who's up and who's down, who hit Jack and who bopped Jill. In this world, what presidential aides say is often more important than what the President says, and of course aides can speak to journalists in a way Presidents generally do not—on "background." This approach, which yields the "inside" or "real" story of an administration, produced *The Acting President*. Here as in other journalism on Reagan, and as in many of the memoirs by former aides (journalists and high government officials have more in common than one might suppose), personalities become more important than ideas, and there is little historical or institutional perspective.

The dominant theme of *The Acting President* is that Reagan, the former actor, was a disengaged, hands-off President who acted his way into the presidency and through it, his advisers working in effect as stage hands, ready with cue cards and other props. Whatever went wrong on his watch (Iran-contra, for example) is blamed on Reagan. Whatever went right (the 1981 legislative successes) is credited to his aides, or at least certain of them—Jim Baker and Michael Deaver, whom the authors interviewed for this book. One passage sums it up: "Ronald Reagan had very little to do with his administration and the issues that came before it. No matter whose name had been on the marquee, when the Reagan administration was at its best it had been people like Baker and [Richard] Darman who had kept the White House running."

This caricature has been drawn so many times before that it boggles the mind why a publisher should think it has to be drawn yet again. Reagan was an actor, true, and used his acting skills while President. He also delegated authority, and was disengaged to the point of being, at times, an irresponsible President (a point, by the way, the authors could have hit more strongly). But there's more to the story. Reagan was once an actor, but he became a political figure, and he cannot be understood apart from this fact. As one can tell from a study of his many speeches, which form the Reagan *logos* (Greek for "word"), ideas mattered to Reagan. And they mattered politically in his climb to the White House and also in his tenure while there.

Any serious treatment of the Reagan years must grasp the importance to Reagan and his administration of these ideas, which include that of limited government at home, and strength in defense of America abroad. And any serious treatment must understand and analyze the policies and programs that drew upon these ideas, and the post-Watergate political milieu in which they were proposed. To fail in these respects, and to reduce Reagan to the acting President—indeed to elevate chosen aides (those skilled at talking to the media) over him—is to diminish and demean the most successful presidency since Eisenhower's.

More books on Reagan are in the works, by journalists and others. It will be a test of those books to see whether they err in the same huge way as *The Acting President*. □

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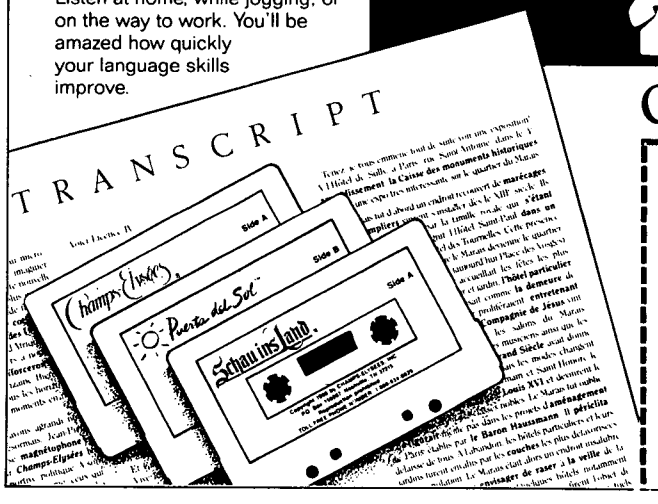

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LETTER FROM BODRUM

by Herb Greer

Bodrum, Turkey

"For Americans," I said to Ahmed, "Turkey is a bird that goes gobble, gobble. You eat it at Thanksgiving and Christmas and then you forget about it." Four of us—me, Ahmed, Haldun, and Turgut—were strolling along the waterfront of Bodrum, on Turkey's Aegean coast. It was no longer the sleepy sponge-fishing village I had known in the sixties. The harbor was dredged out to make a crowded marina, the esplanade was lined with travel agencies, charter firms, small hotels, and restaurants ("Chinese Home Cooking") catering to the flocks of summer tourists, so many of them that the new mayor had been elected on a "no more beds in Bodrum" platform. The medieval castle at the harbor mouth now brooded over an array of shop-filled covered streets, souvenir shops, racks of postcards, and expensive waterside cafes. By the entrance to the castle and its museum of underwater archaeology there were two camels which you could hire for a lurching ride up and down the quai. My Turkish friends and I threaded our way past tanned American girls in well-filled loose T-shirts, who were being ogled by stolid German tourists in white hats, shorts, and running shoes. I was trying to explain to the Turks why most Americans know little and care less about them, although Turkey is a bridge between the Islamic World and the West, a member of NATO, and one of the strategic hinges of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Herb Greer is an American writer and playwright living in England.

"The trouble is," I said, "that for us, Turkey is all mixed up with the Orient Express, belly dancers, Turkish delight, the mysteries of the East, and so on. The Brits and the Americans tend to see it through a fog of clichés from Ottoman times. Sultans, decadent Orientals in pointed slippers who like little boys and fat women, oily Levantine merchants and brutal police who torture people. *Midnight Express* and all that. On a popular level we like this image. It makes us feel superior, at least morally."

None of my companions fitted the Asiatic stereotype of a Turk. Ahmed, a Laz from the north of Turkey, worked in Istanbul as a salesman. He was dark, with large soft eyes, and slimly built, looking rather like a refugee from the Caucasus mountains. Haldun, a heavy, big-shouldered university professor from Ankara, was blond and blue-eyed —a Kurd, in fact—and solemn. Turgut, an advertising executive from Istanbul, had the look of a clean-cut California beach bum with his shock of red hair and long, almost Scandinavian jaw. But the peculiar intensity of his brown eyes was not European.

Haldun kept up with the British press, and asked me about something he had seen in the *London Observer.*

"Did you see what those idiots wrote in London? the playwrights?"

I knew the story. Arthur Miller and Harold Pinter had traveled to Turkey, talked to some "dissidents," and been invited to dinner by the American ambassador. They repaid his hospitality by insulting him, claiming he was encouraging the Turkish police to torture these "dissidents." Then they went back to London and boasted in the *Observer* about what they had done.

"What about the torture?" I asked. "Your police are tough, right? The army, too." I mentioned another incident I knew of, in which the army had come into an eastern Turkish village and taken away thirty of the male population.

"The torture is true," said Turgut. "I said the wrong thing a few years ago. I got six years. I was tortured." He indicated how the soles of his feet had been beaten. "But not because the Americans said so. That was a stupid thing to write."

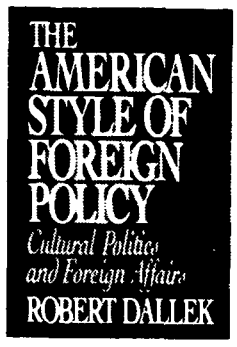
"Miller and Pinter also wrote," I said, "that this treatment destroyed the lives of the people who were tortured." Turgut shrugged.

"I don't like this government," said Ahmed. "The economy is *bozuk* (kaput), everything is *bozuk*, they don't know what to do. The country is a mess. The government is no good, they are weak!"

"What about the dissidents?" I asked. We moved into a cafe, sat down, and ordered some bottles of excellent Turkish beer. Haldun was showing some irritation. He was a conservative Turk, while Ahmed and Turgut were more or less liberal.

"I don't understand people like you," he said to them. "All you do is complain. You don't know what to do. You know how it works here! We have been a democracy since when? 1950?" He turned to me. "Since Ataturk changed the country sixty years ago," he said, "it has been like this: the real foundation of Turkey is the army. Ataturk wanted the politics to go straight, like this—" he held up his hands to indicate a corridor. "When the politics go too far to the right, the

The shape of American foreign policy



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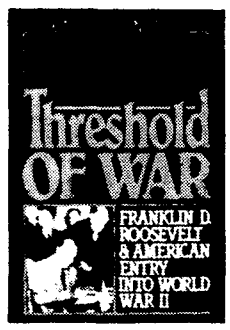

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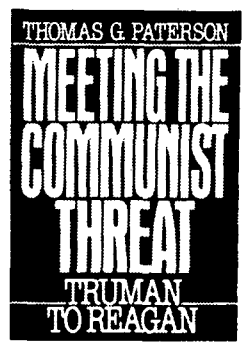

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army comes down, boom!" the hands doubled into fists and struck like hammers. "Then, when the politics go too far to the left, the army comes down, boom!" The same again, on the other side. Haldun leaned forward, forehead wrinkled. "When you do that," he said, "you can't do it case by case. People get hurt. Then some idiot comes from outside and cries that they are hurting people, that nothing else is happening. And please don't tell me about human rights. How were your human rights after sixty years? In 1840? You had slaves! We don't have slaves in Turkey."

"Yeah, but this is 1989 now," I pointed out. "What you have is dissidents who get tortured."

Turgut laughed. "You mean the Kurds. These people are not dissidents. They are terrorists."

"All right, the Kurds."

"Not just our Kurds," he said. "There are Iranian Kurds. Iraq is helping them and the Syrian Kurds. Then there are the Iraqi Kurds. Iran is helping them. Then there are the Turkish Kurds. Syria is helping those. And the Russians are helping all of them. The Kurds think they can make a nation out of all this, but all they can make is trouble. You know why we have Kurdish terrorism in eastern Turkey? Because we are building a dam on the Euphrates River there, and Syria wants to stop it. We guaranteed water to Syria, but still Assad, that bastard, wants to stop the dam. He can't, but he gives the Kurds money and arms to attack us and try."

"Amnesty International," says Haldun, "is not interested in any of that. They complain about the torture, and the village where thirty people were taken away. You know why the army took so many? Because if they take three or four and send them back to the village, everyone will know who gave information and those three or four will be killed. With thirty, no one knows."

Ahmed was looking uncomfortable about all this. "So," I said to him, "you have a lot of things wrong in Turkey. But what can you do about it? I mean, anyone can complain and say *bozuk*." I looked at the others, then back at Ahmed. "*Bozuk* isn't much help," I said. "You're the liberal here. What would you do? What do you need, really?"

Ahmed looked at the table for a few moments. "What we need," he said at last, "is a strong leader." The others nodded.

"Strong leader? But you're a democracy, right?"

"Sure. But the government is too weak. The president is too weak. We need a strong leader."

"What, another Ataturk?"

"Ah." They smiled ruefully.

"Do you think," I asked, "that the Americans will understand this?"

"Which Americans?" asked Ahmed, with a crooked smile. "The ones who come here on holiday? All they care about is the sun and the beach and the postcards."

"And the rest? The ones who read the papers?"

"As long as their bases are safe," said Haldun, "they will understand."

"There are some," I said, "who don't care about the bases. They think we shouldn't have such bases. They think that if you take the bases out of Turkey there will be human rights. And that will make us all better."

"Like Miller and Pinter?" Haldun smiled.

"Sort of. *It's better to be good than* have bases."

"Every country," said Turgut, "has a few stupid people. You can't help that."

"Unfortunately," I said, "there are more than a few. In Britain and Europe, too."

"Not too many, *inshallah*," said Haldun.

"*Inshallah*," I agreed. We drank our beers and got up to go. □

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GEORGE WASHINGTON: A COLLECTION

Compiled and Edited by William B. Allen

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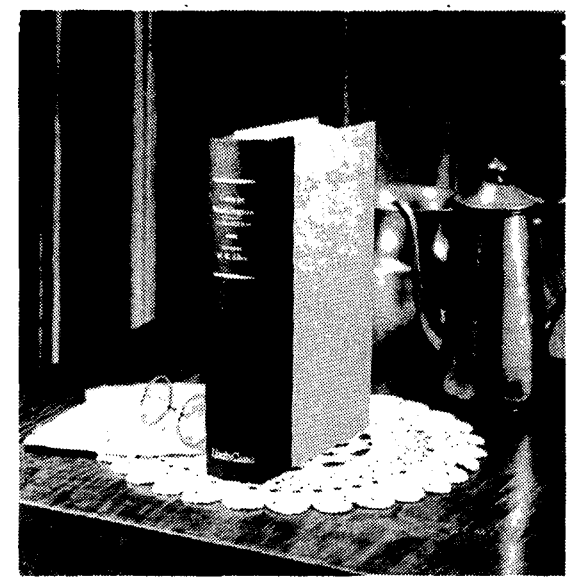

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BETTE DAVIS, RIP

by Bruce Bawer

To view, in quick succession, a half dozen or so of the movies that Bette Davis made during what we may call her Golden Age—during the decade, in other words, between the late 1930s and the late 1940s—can be a rather startling experience. One is surprised, for one thing, to realize how exceedingly narrow an acting range Davis possessed. Like her contemporary Katharine Hepburn (whose striking looks she always envied), Davis specialized in "independent" women; but the characters and stories that she burned into our memories are far less varied than those for which Hepburn did similar honors. While Hepburn, for instance, moved smoothly—and without losing any of her authority and allure and presence—from screwball comedy (*Bringing Up Baby*) to sophisticated comedy (*The Philadelphia Story*) to Tennessee Williams (*Suddenly Last Summer*) to Eugene O'Neill (*Long Day's Journey Into Night*), Davis excelled only within a strictly confined territory. The queen of the so-called women's picture, she specialized in melodramatic heroines who were either outrageously blunt and headstrong or pathetically meek and self-sacrificing or some remarkable combination of the two.

To be sure, she performed capably enough in an urbane romantic farce like *It's Love I'm After* (1937), in which she played half of a jealous, competitive Lunt-and-Fontanne-type Broadway acting team (Leslie Howard played the other half)—but from a 52-year distance she seems oddly misplaced in the role. Her talent is there, but *she* isn't—or, perhaps one should say, her distinctive personal magnetism isn't. It's as if somebody forgot to turn on all the lights. And without those lights on, the talent seems astonishingly run-of-the-mill.

But if one is surprised by the narrowness of Davis's range, one is surprised, too, to notice how masterfully she worked within that range, how skilled she was at making each of her heroines utterly distinctive. For, though they're mostly variations on a handful of familiar types, there's no mistaking Davis's most renowned heroines for one another. They even carry themselves differently: the spinster schoolteacher Miss Moffat in *The Corn Is Green* (1945) treads firmly and resolutely, without a wasted motion, while the spinster heiress Charlotte Vale in *Now, Voyager* (1942) strolls with a graceful sweep, vivacious and self-confident; belle-of-the-ball Fanny Skeffington in *Mr. Skeffington* (1944) glides coquettishly, while belle-of-the-ball Julie Marston in *Jezebel* (1938) moves with every step as if she's trying to pull away from someone's grasp.

One is struck, too, by how contrived the stories of Davis's best films are. They're full of people going blind, of letters that destroy people's lives, of mothers who keep their motherhood secret over decades (with, needless to say, disastrous results). In not one but two movies—*A Stolen Life* (1946) and *Dead Ringer* (1964)—Davis plays twin sisters, one of whom loves the other's husband and (after her death) masquerades as her in order to possess her husband. Implausible transformations abound (making possible a tour-de-force Davis switch from meek to headstrong or vice-versa): in *Dark Victory* (1939), the frivolous, fun-loving heiress Judith Traherne learns she's suffering from a fatal brain tumor, and (after marrying her doctor) dies with selfless stoicism; in *Now, Voyager*, the shy, sexless, mother-dominated Back Bay heiress Charlotte Vale is changed by a psychiatrist (Claude Rains) and by a married man named Jerry Durrance (Paul Henreid), whom she meets and falls in love with on a South American cruise, into a model of poise, conviviality, and romantic passion; and in *Mr. Skeffington*, the shallow, self-indulgent belle Fanny Skeffington is given a chance to redeem herself as a loving helpmeet when diphtheria robs her of her extraordinary beauty (and of her legion of admirers), and fate brings to her doorstep the still-adoring but now penniless ex-husband (Claude Rains) whom she cruelly neglected throughout their marriage, and who has (conveniently) lost his sight and therefore will always see her as beautiful. (Got that?)

There's no getting around the fact that these are soap-opera stories about soap-opera characters. At the same time, however, one is struck by how engrossing these films remain a half-century later, by how sympathetic Davis's heroines are, how compelling their often inane predicaments seem. To watch Davis's best movies is to be fortified in one's judgment that they are decidedly not art—but it is also to come away with the conviction that nobody else in the history of the medium has ever been connected with a series of films that so superbly embody the idea of pure screen entertainment. Granted, there is a camp element to these pictures: watching *Now, Voyager*, one smiles at the famous business with the cigarettes (as you may remember, Henreid lights two of them in his mouth, hands one to Davis, and they blow smoke into each other's faces while staring deeply into each other's eyes; this happens *at least* three times); watching *Mr. Skeffington*, one laughs at the idea of Bette Davis being the most ravishing woman in New York.[1] But at the same time one is hooked; these stories grab one's attention in the opening moments and don't let go until the final credits.

It was not ever thus. Arriving in Hollywood in 1930, Davis began her movie career with a string of thirty-odd pictures, mostly quite forgettable, in many of which her roles were extremely small. Throughout this period, she played tough, even shady types: gangsters' widows, lowlife flirts, hard-boiled nightclub hostesses. Among her few plum roles was that of the crass, licentious waitress, Mildred Rogers, to Leslie Howard's sensitive, lovesick medical student in the widely admired but rather dull *Of Human Bondage* (1934). A year later came *Dangerous*, which won Davis the first of two Academy Awards, and which inspired one reviewer to comment that "Bette Davis would probably have been burned as a witch if she had lived two or three hundred years ago. She gives the curious feeling of being charged with power which can find no ordinary outlet."

That power found its first major outlet in *Jezebel* (1938), for which Davis

Bruce Bawer is The American Spectator*'s movie reviewer.*

[1]One must add, however, that Davis leaves the distinct impression that she's laughing, too; part of the point of the movie is that Fanny is an absurd creature, and part of its achievement is that it manages to make her at once a joke and an object of pathos.

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won her second Oscar. Julie Marston—the antebellum Southern belle whose neurotic willfulness destroys her hopes of romantic happiness—was the first of many remarkably intense, passionate heroines. Julie was succeeded, in *The Old Maid* (1939), by Charlotte Lovell, a Civil War-era Philadelphia woman who allows her child, born out of wedlock, to be raised by her vengeful cousin Delia (Miriam Hopkins); unable to acknowledge her parenthood as she watches the child grow to maturity, Charlotte turns from a sweet young woman into an embittered, misanthropic old spinster.

Charlotte was hardly Davis's only old maid. Indeed, while she played very few mothers, Davis portrayed quite a few spinsters (including—twice—the most eminent one in all history, Queen Elizabeth I). Many of these spinsters are women who—to borrow a phrase from Davis's eponymous character in *The Nanny* (1965)—take care of "other people's children": Charlotte in *The Old Maid* runs a nursery school; Lilly Moffat in *The Corn Is Green* (1945) is a schoolteacher in a Welsh mining town who, at the end of the film, agrees to raise her prize student's bastard child while he attends Oxford on a scholarship; Henriette Deluzy in *All This, and Heaven Too* (1940) is a governess and later a schoolteacher; Charlotte Vale in *Now, Voyager* takes Jerry's troubled daughter Tina into her house and mothers her.

Part of the strategy in such movies, of course, is to win our sympathy for heroines who are big on sacrifice and who, as Henriette says, "must be content with picking up a few crumbs of happiness from other people's tables." When Henriette's employer, the Duc de Praslin (Charles Boyer), with whom she shares a deep but unconsummated love, asks about the lack of fulfillment in her life, she replies: "I have the children and even though they're not mine I sometimes imagine they are." Charlotte Vale responds in like fashion when Jerry poses her a similar question: "When Tina said she wanted to come home and stay with me it was like a miracle happening—like having your child, a part of you—and I even allowed myself to indulge in the fancy that both of us loving her and doing what was best for her together would make her seem actually like our child after a while . . ."

These are women for whom devotion to children is, in large part, a form of sublimation; they approach young people not with a mother's equipoise but with the outsized ardor of women who lack any alternative object of passion. Consequently, they're ideal characters for Davis, who was a natural at embodying fervent devotion, a not-so-natural at quiet fidelity. It's not surprising that in those few films in which Davis does play a quietly loving mother—in *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), for example—she seems oddly passive and unconvincing as such. She is far more believable when playing an indifferent mother like Fanny Skeffington, or a substitute mother like Charlotte Vale or Maggie Patterson in *The Great Lie* (1941), or a mother, like Charlotte Lovell, who is made vicious by her inability to tell her daughter that she *is* her daughter and not her niece; certainly one of the most memorable mother-daughter relationships in any of Davis's films is that in *The Little Foxes* (1941) between her ruthless, tyrannical Regina Giddens—as monstrous a character as ever filled a movie screen—and Teresa Wright's meek, defenseless Alexandra. (Davis plays an equally despotic matriarch, incidentally, in the bizarre 1968 film *The Anniversary.*)

As her performance in a role like Regina Giddens demonstrates, Davis believed unapologetically that motion-picture characters should be at once lifelike and bigger than life. And at her best, she was capable of giving an appearance of magnitude and depth—and even of intelligence—to characters whose actual lack of dimension would, in other hands, have been painfully manifest. But an actress who aims always for bigger-than-life performances must exercise consistent and rigorous self-control to avoid becoming merely flamboyant, garish, histrionic; and it is no secret that Davis did not always succeed entirely in this regard. Even in her finest performances she could not completely avoid gratuitous mannerisms and moments of hamminess; it is no coincidence, surely, that this actress, who at times reminded one a bit too forcefully that she was indeed acting, played more than her share of actresses, from Joyce Heath in *Dangerous* and Joyce Arden in *It's Love I'm After* to Margaret Elliott in *The Star* (1952) and Baby Jane Hudson in the incredibly goofy *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1961).

Self-control, alas, apparently became increasingly hard for Davis. After the late 1940s she grew more and more prone to self-parody, seemingly reveling in her broad trademark gestures, and sometimes offering little more by way of a performance than stiff comportment, tart and halting line readings, and periodic rolling of those protuberant Bette Davis eyes. (Then again, most of her vehicles of the past couple of decades were tawdry TV movies and gruesome horror flicks with titles like *Scream, Pretty Peggy,* none of which

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deserved any better from her.) It is no coincidence that her best work after the late 1940s—in *All About Eve* (1950)—was in the role of a stage actress, Margo Channing, who had a decidedly theatrical manner, and that part of the reason for the success of Davis's other most celebrated later role, in *Baby Jane*, was that the film provided a sound dramatic context for extreme immoderation on her part. As for her wonderfully restrained performance in *The Nanny*—a first-rate Hitchcock-style thriller about an unobtrusive English governess bent on murder—it seems almost miraculous, coming as it did between the grisly *Hush . . . Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964) and *The Anniversary*, for both of which Davis pulled out a great many more stops than was probably advisable.

Yet what makes Bette Davis worth remembering is not the failings of her weakest work but the high caliber of her strongest. At her best, she mesmerized, lending a semblance of urgency to material that might otherwise (as a reviewer suggested of *Dark Victory*) be dismissed as "emotional claptrap." In *Now, Voyager, The Old Maid, Mr. Skeffington,* and half a dozen other movies she leaves us a collection of supremely captivating diversions that, for what they have managed for so long to do so well, have rarely been surpassed. □

THE GREAT SIAMESE SALOON SERIES

THE AUTHORS' LOUNGE

by Richard Brookhiser

Westerners think of everything east of Crete as being unfathomably ancient—rose-red cities half as old as time, that kind of thing. Bangkok isn't. It came into existence because the Burmese, about the time of the French and Indian Wars, obliterated the then-capital of Siam, Ayutthaya. The Thais finally won the war, but they needed a new capital. They settled on Bangkok in the 1780s, which makes it about the same age as Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; much younger than Albany, New York.

It's as grim as those places too. There was a time, not too long ago, when Bangkok was the "Venice of the East," criss-crossed by bucolic canals. That time is gone for good. The canals that remain are the color of India ink. Residents go to and fro by bus, car, and motorized three-wheelers called tuk-tuks. The traffic is simply hellish. It makes cross-town travel in Manhattan in rush hour seem like rodding a jeep over sand-dunes. The only good thing about the hub-bub is that it forces you to take your sightseeing at a civilized pace, with frequent breathers.

Let me dispose of the inescapable question, and say that I took no breathers in Patpong, which is Bangkok's red-light district. Why it should be assumed that everyone who goes to Bangkok also goes there is mysterious to me, for I would think there were better reasons to cross the Pacific Ocean than to ogle prostitutes doing tricks with razor blades and fruit. And yet not only were my wife and I asked four times by an expat journalist if he couldn't show us around, since we would "learn about the country" thereby, but all the guidebooks take the same attitude as well. Thais are freer about sex than we are, the line goes, so the scene isn't so grim. Well, the girls are teenagers from the north who have been sold into the business by their parents, and the disease timebomb atop which they are sitting must be immense, so it sounds pretty grim to me. I'd rather cool off at the Authors' Lounge of the Oriental Hotel.

The Oriental has a prime location, on the bank of the Chao Phyaya river, the main aquatic drag, bustling with ferries, plump rice barges, and darting yellow-striped taxi-boats, their propellers buzzing at the end of long free-swiveling driveshafts like angry tails. The Oriental's admirers call it the best hotel in the world. It may well have the best service: there are definite advantages to visiting a culture which is founded on the avoidance of unpleasantness.

As the premier hotel in town for more than a century, the Oriental has hosted most of the famous folk who have passed through. The Authors' Lounge is named in honor of the writers. The most important writerly guest was the first, Joseph Conrad, though there is some sleight of hand in the Conrad connection, for while he did stay at the Oriental in 1888, he checked in as a ship's captain, not a literatus. He was still, as we would say, gathering material, or, as he probably would have said, doing his job.

The other literary gents (and ladies) of whom the Oriental brags, however, came there in the bloom of their powers. On the way into the lounge, the hotel keeps a pair of bookcases stocked with their work. Since they have been a diverse lot, the little library is an odd selection, *Of Human Bondage* jostling *Myra Breckinridge*. The Oriental also serves drinks which it bills as its authors' favorites. Some make me wonder. Do we really know, for instance, that Conrad favored lychee slings? Others—Barbara Cartland: pink champagne—have a ring of truth. I tried one of these offerings, which was assigned to James Michener, and called a Jade Dream. The list of ingredients included blue curaçao, and *crème de bananes*. It came in one of those vivid colors, whose secret I thought had been lost with the Thunderbirds of the Eisenhower Administration, and it tasted like *really good* dentist's mouthwash. I drank it, but I didn't order another. As Voltaire said when invited to a second homosexual orgy at the court of Frederick the Great, once was philosophy, twice would be perversion.

You can also get afternoon tea. When I was there, the Oriental was celebrating the one hundredth birthday of the Savoy of London, and it had imported two of the birthday girl's staff for the occasion, along with their Fortnum and Mason's tea things. There was also a pianist in black tie, performing an E-Z-2 Play version of Chopin's Nocturne in E flat.

To tell you the truth, the best thing about the Authors' Lounge is sitting there. The prevailing color is white—white stone walls and balustrades, white wooden gingerbread, white wicker tables and chairs. A double staircase curves to the second floor. Pots of stately bamboo sit in the corners. The walls are decorated with pictures of Thai royalty of the last century, testing their newfangled automobiles, or arrayed in top hats.

It has a *raj*, Jewel-in-the-Crown feel to it, but that's not quite right. For Thailand belongs to the short list of places on earth that were never owned by Europeans. Part of its fortune was due to the fact that it lay midway between India and Indochina, so that rival empires cancelled each other out. Another part was that the heyday of European colonizing coincided with the back-to-back reigns of two energetic Thai kings. The first, Mongkut, became Yul Brynner (Thais consider both the musical/movie and the book on which it was based to be condescending slanders). He died after taking his court to a malarial island in the south to witness an eclipse he had forecasted. His successor, Chulalongkorn, is the one in the topper. If you sail up river an hour to his palace at Bang Pa-In, you can see the grounds decorated with pseudo-classical statuary, just like an Italian garden.

So the nineteenth-century Thais borrowed this and that from the Western world, not because they were forced to, but because they wanted to. Which is, of course, an even greater tribute. They wanted to because the West struck them as being, in certain respects, better. Chulalongkorn once lost a wife because when the barge she was riding on sank, none of her subjects could touch her royal person, even to pull her to safety. The civilization in which rulers could be touched was heading toward problems of its own—World War I, for instance. But it seemed, to intelligent non-Westerners c. 1910, to have solved some of its (and their) other problems along the way.

The problem of where to get a drink in the tropics in soothing surroundings is still solved by the Authors' Lounge. □

Richard Brookhiser is a senior editor of National Review *and a columnist for the* New York Observer.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE CLOSED CIRCLE: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ARABS

David Pryce-Jones/Harper & Row/464 pp. $25

Steven C. Munson

"The treason of an Arab begins when he enjoys listening to Mozart or Beethoven." This statement, made by a Tunisian, appears near the end of *The Closed Circle*. It is shocking even to someone who thinks he has some notion of what separates Arab culture from our own. For what this statement makes clear, in as stark a way as could be imagined, is the absolute nature of the Arab alienation from the West.

That alienation is the subject of this profoundly revealing and disturbing book. Fluent in Arabic, David Pryce-Jones spent several years of his childhood in Morocco and later returned to the Middle East many times. *The Closed Circle* is the work not of a specialist in Arab affairs, but of a writer who has tried to make sense of his experience and of the seemingly irrational realities of life in the Arab world. The book is based on his travel and observations as well as a comprehensive reading of Arab literature—from political tracts and sociological studies to memoirs and novels. Indeed, in reading this book one is struck by the degree to which the author allows the Arabs to speak for themselves. His refusal to patronize or condescend to the people he is writing about enables us to see them as they really are.

And what are the Arabs? First and foremost, they are a people still rooted in tribal society. For Arabs today, as in the past, family (or group) loyalty takes precedence over individual identity, and the family "is in the hands of an undisputed autocrat who judges himself fit to assess and extend the collective interest." Wives and children are viewed as instruments to be used for the head of the family's self-aggrandizement. From birth, boys are considered "capital investment," girls, "the fountainhead of shame." Marriages are arranged, the object of the parents on both sides being to increase their family's standing and honor. A son who refuses the bride selected for him shames his family and may be dealt with severely. Girls bring shame by losing their virginity before marriage, an offense so serious that by committing it they risk death. Often they are killed by their own brothers, who feel no remorse, only satisfaction at having restored the family's honor.

In some Arab countries, among them Egypt, girls must submit to the pain and degradation of female circumcision, which serves, as one Arab commentator put it, as "a vaccination against the dangers of sexuality." Possessed of few rights, little freedom, and an inferior status, denied opportunities for education, work, and ownership, women are valued insofar as they are able to produce children, especially boys. Even today, polygamy, underage marriage, temporary marriage, and divorce by repudiation are common practices in the Arab world, and in some places, such as the royal households of Saudi Arabia, one can still find harems, concubines, and slave girls.

Needless to say, such practices are incompatible with Western notions of romantic love, which presuppose relations of fundamental equality and respect between men and women. Indeed, as Pryce-Jones points out, the "cult of virginity" is matched by a "cult of virility," with the most honor accruing to the man who demonstrates his sexual prowess in ways "which in other circumstances would obviously be a debasement, and a brutalization of human feelings." He cites the example of the late King Saud of Saudi Arabia, who on one occasion fell ill and had to be flown out of the country for medical treatment. Before consenting to leave, the King insisted on having his favorite wife brought to his bed. As a former steward tells it:

> With the assistance of four slaves, the sick King had intercourse with the woman. The next day, after the King's departure had been publicly announced, word of his "strength" the night before was discreetly passed around Riyadh, and his people were thus reassured that he was not too weak to rule.

At a less exalted level, Pryce-Jones notes the case of an 85-year-old merchant in Abu Dhabi who, according to a local news agency, "married two teenage girls simultaneously and consummated both marriages the same night."

Such reports notwithstanding, it is apparent that Arab attitudes toward sex and marriage are no less crippling for men than they are for women. Just as the prohibitions concerning premarital sex—which preclude even innocent physical expressions of affection—lead in some places to widespread homosexuality (and bestiality), so the obsession with marital performance and the publicity surrounding the marriage consummation leave many Arab men sexually inadequate. Pryce-Jones relates a particularly telling incident involving a young Palestinian living in the West Bank, who found himself impotent on his wedding night. After trying a variety of home remedies, all to no avail, his family finally gave up. "Far from coming to terms with the psychological consequences of custom," comments Pryce-Jones, "popular wisdom reached the helplessly fatalistic group conclusion that the man's impotence was like the Israeli occupation, and God's will. 'When God changes his mind, the Jews will go. When he changes his mind, Khalil's penis will rise.' "

Such fatalism is not, Pryce-Jones insists, the result of some flaw in the Arab national character, as many mystified Westerners—and even some Arab observers—have concluded. It is, rather, a way of avoiding shame (in this case, by attributing a young man's lack of virility to a power beyond his control). According to Pryce-Jones, considerations of shame and honor are always uppermost in the Arab mind, making daily life an entirely different matter from what it is in the West. A Westerner soon discovers that doing business or just having a conversation with an Arab can be an unsettling experience, since lying "in the Arab world is not really a moral matter but a method of safeguarding honor and status." Moreover, codes of shame and honor cannot be reconciled with Western concepts of contractual relationships, equal treatment under the law, or "the workings of a state with norms legally defined and voluntarily obeyed." On the contrary, "the individual finds honor-justification in whatever will promote his career." Since careerism is the highest value, "no dishonor attaches to such primary transactions as selling short weight, deceiving anyone about quality, quantity or kinds of

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Steven C. Munson has written for Commentary, *the* National Interest, *and other publications.*

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goods, cheating at gambling, and bearing false witness. The doer of these things is merely quicker off the mark than the next fellow; owing him nothing, he is not to be blamed for taking what he can."

This logic applies in every area of Arab life, with the avoidance of shame always the first imperative. To get a job, for instance, a young man approaches the head of his family or clan, who:

> is under obligation to do his very best to make sure that his kinsman is given what he asks for. The honor of the whole family is at stake. . . . In the event of the job going to someone else, the patron becomes the object of shame, and his standing is under threat until such time as he can reestablish it by whatever means, and his young kinsman is satisfied. Placing him, the patron has the right to expect allegiance and loyalty in return, and so he himself is also taking a careerist step forward.

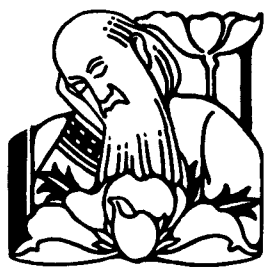
As Pryce-Jones points out, "Civic spirit, the good of the community, or mere considerations of who could best perform the job in hand has no part in these proceedings. Jobbing and dealing, even in the most sophisticated Arab circles, remains an essential business of promoting and protecting one's own kind."

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Arab societies, even those blessed with oil, have done so little to improve the conditions under which people live, despite the outward signs of modernization. In an illustrative anecdote, Pryce-Jones recounts the experience of Ian Young, an English doctor who in the early 1970s worked as a gynecologist at a hospital in Algeria. After observing the filth and malpractice the patients were forced to endure, Young complained to the hospital supervisor, who held his post as a reward for his services as a nursing orderly during the war of liberation. Shamed by Young's exposure of his negligence and incompetence, the supervisor responded by denouncing him:

> He shook me, and I didn't resist. . . . He knew all pathology, more than any doctor in the hospital, he knew "all the pathology in the world," all surgery and gynecology too, and he gave me a shake with every subject. . . . How it pained him, that all the sacrifices of the black hours should be brought to nothing, by "white-coated saboteurs passing their hands from vagina to vagina, infecting my heroic people with syphilis!" He would never tolerate it, never! His voice became hysterical. "Get out!" he shrieked. "Leave this hospital immediately! Leave this country!"

As Pryce-Jones makes clear, such behavior, however inconceivable in a Western setting, is neither wanton nor irrational, but simply characteristic of the way Arabs respond to a setback or challenge. Whether the institution one is charged with overseeing actually works the way it is supposed to is not a relevant concern; what matters is protecting one's honor and preserving, or improving, one's position.

This careerist ethos finds its ultimate expression in Arab political life, which continues to operate, as it has for centuries, in accordance with tribal norms. Since tribal society has no mechanism for determining leadership, those who hold positions of power and those who aspire to such positions are locked in a constant, if not always visible, struggle in which ambition, ruthlessness, and cruelty are prerequisites for success. Typically, an Arab ruler begins his career by joining a small conspiracy, perhaps sealed with solemn oaths. Through bribery and acts of violence—honored because they demonstrate his "warrior-like" qualities—he widens his circle of loyalists, at the same time offering his allegiance and services to one or more powerful patrons (the army, a foreign government) in exchange for support. When the opportunity presents itself, he makes his bid, killing or exiling the current power-holder (or, if unsuccessful, being killed or ex-



Faith and Intelligence:

Are They Compatible?

Among the well-educated the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted, unlettered, and irrational. Yet recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From the Ivy League to Vanderbilt to Stanford, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, hedonism, technological utopianism, egotism, Freudianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, justice, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

The *Times* article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this return to religion, and rightly so. We at the REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual engagement with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." Among other things, we scrutinize the religious dimensions of the great events and issues of the past and present, and probe the wisdom offered not only by the Bible and Church fathers, but also by such diverse giants as St. Francis, Aquinas, Dante, Thomas More, Kierkegaard, Newman, Dostoyevsky, Chesterton, Bonhoeffer, Eliot, Silone, Maritain, Niebuhr, Solzhenitsyn, Dorothy Day, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther King Jr., Flannery O'Connor, Lech Walesa, Mother Teresa, Graham Greene, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Pope John Paul II.

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Those who write for us — Sheldon Vanauken, Robert N. Bellah, John Lukacs, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Russell Kirk, Robert Coles, Francis Canavan, Christopher Lasch, Walker Percy, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Peter Kreeft, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. We'll keep you on your toes.

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iled himself). He also kills (or otherwise neutralizes) his original co-conspirators, whom he now considers, not unreasonably, to be a threat. To consolidate his power, he places members of his own family or tribal, ethnic, or religious group in key positions, distributes the largess at his disposal among loyal followers, and persecutes those who might oppose him. He also looks beyond his borders for opportunities to mount his next power-challenge, all the while worrying that somewhere a new conspiracy may be forming, this time against him.

The consequences of this cycle—oppression, misery, and endless warfare—have varied little over time, or from one Arab country to another. As Pryce-Jones shows in a brilliant series of biographical portraits, Arab (or Muslim) rulers like Anwar Sadat, Muammar Qaddafi, Hafez al-Assad, Saddam Hussein, and Ayatollah Khomeini, for all their differences in personality, education, and background, "have conducted themselves with a conformity that makes their roles in practice so alike as to be interchangeable." Modern technology has made Arab despotisms more efficient, and modern ideologies—Pryce-Jones has illuminating chapters on the influence of Nazism and Communism—have supplied Arab rulers with both inspiration and a means of mobilizing support. Islam itself, in Pryce-Jones's view, has done little to alter the tribal legacy, becoming simply another instrument by which aspiring power-holders have made their careers.

As for Western influences—ideas of scientific rationality, economic efficiency, social improvement, citizenship, elections, democracy—Arab power-holders have paid them lip service for more than a century in the correct belief that by doing so they could gain the foreign sponsorship needed either to fend off challenges to their rule or to launch a challenge against somebody else. For their part, Westerners—including the colonial powers—have largely accommodated the Arabs, usually failing to grasp that disputes in the Arab world (like those engulfing Lebanon) are effectively settled only through the unflinching application of superior force. Efforts to introduce Western-style reforms have failed everywhere they have been tried. As Pryce-Jones notes, in the history of the Muslim Middle East there has been exactly one election that could be called free and fair, and it was held nearly four decades ago, in Turkey.

There seems little likelihood that this condition will change. In Pryce-Jones's words:

> Considerations of shame and honor forbid crimes of careerism from being judged for what they are. Honor is accorded to the man who succeeds in capturing the state because he has truly proved his mastery, he has displayed ruthlessness beyond the imagination and capacity of the ordinary man. . . . So it happens that the Arab masses come to accept and even to admire their oppressor.

In view of this reality, the metaphor of a closed circle seems entirely apt. □

THE POLITICS OF LITERARY REPUTATION: THE MAKING AND CLAIMING OF "ST. GEORGE" ORWELL

John Rodden/Oxford University Press/478 pp. $27.50

Christopher Caldwell

During the Cold War, the Marxist Isaac Deutscher described *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an "ideological superweapon" for the West. Most contemporary readers would share his slant, but there have been as many different readings of George Orwell as there have been readers. Norman Podhoretz sees him as a guiding spirit of neoconservatism, Christopher Hitchens finds (*ben trovato*!) a believer in "common ownership," Christopher Hollis meets a Catholic, *Izvestia* comes up with a chronicler of the U.S. police state, and Christian and Jewish fundamentalists see *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an Armageddon prophecy.

Some of these characterizations of Orwell's work are based on bias, others on ignorance, but, at first glance, sorting out the "true" Orwell from the "false" Orwell seems hardly more important than figuring out whether Jesus was black or whether God is a woman. John Rodden disagrees; to him, what is at stake is nothing less than the "ransacking of Orwell's legacy," and he spends well over 400 pages setting our hero's house in order. He begins by chronicling some of the perversions Orwell's name has undergone: Senator Kennedy tells the National Press Club, "We might agree to let Reagan be Reagan, but it is frightening to think about letting Reagan be Orwell"; as the Marcos government collapses, a newspaper writes, "Orwell Takes Over as Philippine Society Crumbles." To invoke our culture's bravest critic of totalitarianism as a symbol of injustice is rather like blaming Lou Gehrig for Lou Gehrig's disease.

The Politics of Literary Reputation is both an expanded critical bibliography and a systematic study of reputation as a literary issue. Rodden breaks responses to Orwell down into a "picture gallery" of four Orwellian "faces": the Rebel, the Common Man, the Prophet, and the Saint (he's a big one for taxonomies). Institutional and individual attitudes are lumped into these categories; we get "Trilling's Orwell," "Williams's Orwell," "The Soviet Union's Orwell," "Orwell in the Classroom," and so on.

Laced with jargon, the book is slow going, and will appeal more to academics than to lovers of Orwell. There is little of the man here; anyone looking for Orwell the tramp, the gardener, the war hero, the sexual adventurer, will come away disappointed. Rodden is far more concerned with Orwell's "reception history," and for long passages the book is a litany of academic and journalistic bickering. Rodden is an enemy of cultural canons ("all reputations are adventitious and conditional"), and is overindulgent of some of Orwell's more fatuous readers.

The Orwell Rodden admires most is that of Irving Howe, whom he calls the "designated keeper of the Orwell flame"; he devotes several pages to an intellectual history of Howe himself. The Orwell Howe knows is the fullest in the book, largely because Rodden gives him the breathing room to expatiate on the nonpolitical Orwell. "I came to appreciate," says Howe, "the side of Orwell that wanted and needed to get away from politics." Howe subtly catches a key to Orwell's status as the only *beloved* political writer of recent years—throughout his life, Orwell seemed to believe that the pressing problems of political organization and economic equity would more likely be solved in pubs than in parliaments.

Rodden pairs and contrasts Howe's reception of Orwell with Norman Podhoretz's, which makes sense only for the fact that both are New York Jews who came to intellectual maturity together in the 1950s. If Howe's Orwell is the fullest, Podhoretz's is the sharpest politically, despite Rodden's skepticism. Rodden's reading of Podhoretz rests on a controversial 1983 *Harper's* article, "If Orwell Were Alive Today," in which Podhoretz claimed Orwell would have been a neoconservative.

Rodden calls the article "audacious," and accuses Podhoretz of "converting Orwell posthumously, and of caricature." It seems uncharitable of Rodden to expect his own preoccupations to be covered in such an article, which has more the tone of a *jeu d'esprit* than of a propagandist tract. Podhoretz merely brought Orwell to bear on certain defined foreign policy issues, like the disarmament movement, which rests on the pacifism that Orwell deplored. Podhoretz seems on firm ground when quoting him:

> "If someone drops a bomb on your mother, go and drop two bombs on his mother."

> "If the English people suffered for several years a real weakening of morale, so that the Fascist nations judged that they were 'decadent' and that it was safe to plunge into war, the intellectual sabotage from the Left was partly responsible."

> ". . . in the more active section of the Left the orthodoxy of the moment is anti-Americanism. . . . How anyone can believe [in cutting links with America] after looking at the map and remembering what happened to neutrals in the late war, I do not know."

In 1947, Orwell offered to subsidize the distribution of *Animal Farm* in the Eastern bloc, and it's unlikely he would have grown more trusting of the Soviet Union had he lived to see the tanks roll into Budapest and Prague.

Podhoretz was "a good deal more

Christopher Caldwell is an editor and writer living in Washington.

TROTSKY

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diffident" about claiming Orwell as a nonsocialist, and didn't press the point, aside from citing the famous remark from *The Road to Wigan Pier* that "the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England." His claiming of Orwell doesn't sound "audacious" to me. Neither Podhoretz nor Rodden mentions the remarks of Frederic Warburg, who became Orwell's publisher after Victor Gollancz rejected *Homage to Catalonia* for fear that it would offend the British Communist party:

> I don't think he was ever a socialist, although he would have described himself as a socialist. . . . He didn't like progress; he preferred the old ways, the traditional ways, which is surely not the road of socialism. . . . How could [Gollancz] publish a book which, brilliant as it was, was all the same violently anti-socialist? . . . The paperback edition . . . contained a preface by Gollancz himself saying that Orwell was in fact acting as devil's advocate against socialism, though omitting to mention that Orwell was not only a devil's advocate but *believed* the views of the devil's advocate.

As for where he would have stood today, Orwell was anti-abortion, anti-contraception, anti-Scots, anti-Irish, anti-Indian, anti-homosexual (he referred to Oxbridge Marxists as "the pansy Left"), rabidly anti-Catholic, and probably anti-Semitic, views which would certainly have excluded him from the special-interest politics of the Dukakis-era Democrats or the Kinnock-era Labour party.

Rodden, who describes himself as a "left-of-center white male of working-class origins, a post-Vatican II Catholic liberal, an academic in English and Communication Studies, and an American who came to Orwell's work in the 1970s," claims not to carry a brief for any political camp, and for the most part he is scrupulously fair-minded. Still, some of Rodden's "faces" of Orwell are more equal than others, and he has no qualms about calling Orwell "a democratic socialist."

Rodden's unwillingness to define the term "socialism" is itself a grave failing. It can be expected that those who helped create Orwell's reputation will differ on what socialism means, but, in a book that begs the question of Orwell's political allegiances on every page, one expects to see the issue of his socialist sympathies better defined. Rodden never makes clear whether he's referring to Mrs. Thatcher's share-owning welfare state, Castro's low-tech Stalinism, or even the redistributive capitalism of contemporary America. Orwell was uncomfortable with the English class system, which has no equivalent in this country, and Rodden could have done a better job in distilling Orwell's class obsessions from his economic ones and acknowledging the difference. Under such a vague rubric it's no more difficult to claim Orwell as a socialist than it is to claim him as an Englishman with a moustache.

Orwell used political terms with a similar vagueness. Even in his socialist manifesto *The Lion and the Unicorn*, he made only tentative recommendations for any political program, and in his novels political ideals are always running up against human frailties. To read him alongside the explicitly political literature of his era, like those "socialist realism" novels in which the guy who gets the girl is the one who requisitions the most grain, is to realize how rare it is for political writers to think about human beings. Orwell's characters fish, drink, swindle, pray, write poetry, go to whores, play polo, gamble, pick hops, have bad teeth, dodge creditors, beat their wives, and worry about birthmarks. Except where political change is no longer the prerogative of human beings, readers of every political stripe are going to want to claim Orwell as one of their own. □

GREAT PLAINS

Ian Frazier/Farrar, Straus & Giroux/290 pp. $17.95

Wayne Michael Sarf

I suppose one shouldn't make this complaint about any book originating with *New Yorker* "fact" pieces, but *Great Plains* is too short. It's not because readers will decide that Ian Frazier has shortchanged his subject, or abruptly polished off a book to satisfy a contract. It's simply because he's such splendid company out West.

"Away to the Great Plains of America," he cries, "to that immense Western short-grass prairie now mostly plowed under! Away to the still-empty land beyond newsstands and malls and velvet restaurant ropes! . . . Away to the land where TV used to set its most popular dramas, but not anymore! . . . Away to the fields of wheat and milo and sudan grass and flax and alfalfa and nothing!"

And the sky. For those who haven't seen the Plains, Frazier conjures up that sky. "I'm on the Great Plains!" a West Indian woman cries into the telephone. "It's amazing here! The sky is like a person yawned and never stopped!" Seeing it yourself is best, of course. But in an age when "most travelers who see the plains do it from thirty thousand feet," the heartland has become fly-over country. This vast area—about 2,500 miles long by 600 miles across at its widest, extending to ten states (and into Canada) without fully embracing any, where each county has recorded a loss in population since the 1920s—may offer little incentive for even a journalist's extended exploration, unless he pursues a dream, or has already lost one.

Ian Frazier fits both categories. In 1982, having dreamed for years of Montana, he rented a house in Kalispell: "I did not know one person in Montana. I sat in the house and tried to write a novel. . . . I went for walks, drank quarts of Coors beer, listened to the radio . . ." Alas, "suddenly I no longer had any place to dream about." So he began dreaming about the Great Plains. For fantasies, they "are in many respects the perfect place," so big that "you could never know all there is to know about them—your fantasies could never wear them out." Three years later he moved back to New York, but with 6,000 miles' worth of rambling to write about, evoking both the Plains' vastness and their strangely intimate world.

Frazier has that apparent necessity for writers of *New Yorker* fact pieces, a knack for the deadpan, alienated-observer description:

> All at once a low-slung '67 Pontiac full of long-haired Indians passed me, going about ninety. Then a Montana state highway cop, with no sirens going. Then several more cars of Indians, then another highway cop, then more Indians. Just across the Flathead Reservation and inside the boundary of Glacier National Park, I came upon the cars again. They were now pulled every which way off the road; policemen and Indians, both, were just standing there, hands in pockets. Some were looking off into the brush. Nobody's mouth was moving.

Only later does he learn that they had stopped at the spot where two murdered Indians had been found. The killers were two Canadians, one of whom "said he had always wanted to see what it felt like to kill somebody. He said that it felt like nothing."

The same pokerfaced prose seems appropriate to Frazier's frequent historical interludes, the humor Plains-dry without falling Plains-flat. The despondent dude Teddy Roosevelt "knocked down a man who was mean to him in a bar, and caught three other men who stole a boat from him, and cheered up." Connecting a future historian's 1846 reaction to Oregon Trail travelers with a name marked on Register Cliffs in 1859, Frazier muses: "Francis Parkman was Harvard '44, of an old Boston family; one gets the feeling that people named Thyrza Hoe Pelling were not exactly his speed." A rare bit of metaphysical speculation ends up whackier than the jokes; brooding on the remains of hard-drinking Fort Union, North Dakota, Frazier wonders if the scenery has "somehow been permanently altered by the thousands of drunken eyes which have looked at it before."

As his extensive notes reveal, this history buff has an understandable fondness for first-hand accounts, such as General James S. Brisbin's 1881 *The Beef Bonanza; or, How to Get Rich on the Plains*: "Someone had highlighted the general's more far-fetched projections of riches with a wavering, hopeful, faded line." But his reading lacks system. Carelessly using Charlie Siringo's *A Texas Cowboy* as a source on Billy the Kid, he repeats the tale that "the Kid" played the piano inside a besieged house as flames licked at the parlor. His mysterious reference to "the 4th Cavalry" as "an all-black brigade" confuses the black 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments with Colonel Ranald Mackenzie's white 4th. Rashly accepting the claim that General George Crook and thirteen Sioux chiefs "plotted to kill Crazy Horse" after his surrender, he discusses his death without, apparently, having consulted Captain John Bourke's classic *On The Border With Crook*, wherein we find Little Big Man's claim to have slain the chief—accidentally! But one must admire his instincts, as he omits an account of Crazy Horse kneeling to shake hands with Crook "because (1) I don't completely believe it and (2) I don't like it."

Though now greatly outnumbered on the Plains by whites, Indians figure largely in Frazier's odyssey—which is as it should be. His roadside vignettes of modern Indian life, unsurprisingly, tend toward the depressing, as when he encounters a couple bound for the funeral of one of nine young Arapaho men who had committed suicide on the reservation that year: "Lydell White Plume said he thought the problem was lack of communication." When White

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Wayne Michael Sarf is the author of God Bless You, Buffalo Bill: A Layman's Guide to History and the Western Film.

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Plume opens his car's hatchback to carefully lift out and display portions of his fragile, feathered dance costume, there seems a poignant symbolism in the moment. Jim Yellow Earring of the Sioux helpfully tells Frazier how the Crow Indians "drink Lysol, also known as 'Montana gin,' which will sure get you drunk, but which can collapse your lungs if you don't mix it right . . . "

Unfortunately, Frazier himself victimizes his pre-modern Indians, by homogenizing them. "All kinds of Indians lived on the plains," he notes correctly. But as he tells us about "Indian" customs (some new to this reviewer but regrettably un-footnoted), we should recall that there are no such people as "Indians"—at least not generic ones, as in "Indians ate young, fat dogs" (some did, others didn't), "ants," "grasshoppers," and so on. Judging from his citation of specific *tribal* customs, Frazier knows this, but perhaps breaking up his custom-cadence with tribal names would be a drag.

Frazier suffers from no mysticism concerning primitive ecologists: "Among the Indians, no part of the buffalo was ever wasted—except sometimes, when a tribe might kill a herd of fourteen hundred and cut out the tongues to take to the traders for whiskey, or when a war party on enemy hunting ground would shoot animals and leave them on the ground to rot." The whites were of course even more wanton (and more systematic) killers, buffalo disappearing up the railway tracks "like water up a straw"; but Frazier's treatment of a hitchhiking German archeologist manages to seem a put-down of a meddling Teuton even if he didn't intend it that way.

. . . "Za vite people in America haff done zuch terrible sings to za Indians," he said. "Za vite people haff destroyed zo many uff za Indians' zacred blaces."

I looked at him. "What is your name?" I asked.

"Gerhard Stadler," he said.

I asked him to spell it. He did, and then shut up.

Yet it is an Indian who occupies the book's spiritual center—a veritable dream of an Indian. Frazier loves Crazy Horse for all the right reasons—and places the historian George Hyde, who had sneered at Crazy Horse's admirers for glamorizing a man so narrow-minded, selfish, and impractical, among those who "do not get the point at all."

Personally, I love Crazy Horse because even the most basic outline of his life shows how great he was; because he remained himself from the moment of his birth to the moment he died . . . because, unlike many people all over the world, when he met white men he was not diminished by the encounter . . . because the idea of becoming a farmer apparently never crossed his mind; because he didn't end up in the Dry Tortugas; because he never met the President . . . because, deprived of freedom, power, occupation, culture, trapped in a situation where bravery was invisible, he was still brave . . . because, like the rings of Saturn, the carbon atom, and the underwater reef, he belonged to a category of phenomena which our technology had not then advanced far enough to photograph; because no photograph or painting or even sketch of him exists; because he is not the Indian on the nickel, the tobacco pouch, or the apple crate. Crazy Horse was a slim man of medium height with brown hair hanging below his waist and a scar above his lip. Now, in the mind of each person who imagines him, he looks different.

Once, he tells us, "America's size in the imagination was limitless. . . . Like the center of a dying fire, the Great Plains held that original vision longest." Thus, just as Europeans finally came to the Plains and changed them, so did they slay a man with the misfortune "to live in a place which existed both in reality and in the dreams of people far away . . ." But is this not the paradox of the mythic West? The civilization for which the conqueror yearned turns to dust in the mouths of his children, even as the conquest, the struggle of white and red, becomes part of our Heroic Age. Without the tragedy, there can be no elegy—perhaps not even a Crazy Horse, who without the coming of the Europeans and their horses might have been left to flourish or perish unknown in gory, pointless scalping raids against enemy tribesmen. For moderns, the tragedy is part of the dream, with a fallen Crazy Horse at the end of the trail. But for Frazier he can be no mere, easy symbol, to be snatched up by his conqueror; his trueness to himself transcends this. Dying and in pain, "still as far from white men as the limitless continent they once dreamed of," he had refused to lie on an officer's cot. "What a distance there is between that cot and the floor! On the cot, he would have been, in some sense, 'ours': an object of pity, an accident victim, 'the noble red man, the last of his race, etc., etc.' But on the floor Crazy Horse was Crazy Horse . . ."

Frazier is not interested in theorizing, Walter Prescott Webb–style, on the way in which the Plains shaped American culture or society. His quest is for a dream never quite realized, and also never quite defined. Driving to tiny Nicodemus, Kansas, founded in the 1870s by black homesteaders, he expects ruins—and, miraculously, not only finds a living town, but arrives in the midst of its Founders' Day Weekend. He has a swell time:

. . . Suddenly I felt a joy so strong it almost knocked me down. It came up my spine and settled on my head like a warm cap and filled my eyes with tears, while I stood there packed in with everybody, watching Mrs. Robinson's lovely daughters dance.

And I thought, *It could have worked!* This democracy, this land of freedom and equality and the pursuit of happiness—it could have worked! There was something to it, after all! It didn't have to turn into a greedy free-for-all! We didn't have to make a mess of it and the continent and ourselves! It could have worked! It wasn't just a joke, just a blind for the machinations of money! . . . For a moment I could imagine the past rewritten, wars unfought, the buffalo and the Indians undestroyed, the prairie unplundered. Maybe history did not absolutely have to turn out the way it did. Maybe the history of the West, for example, could have involved more admiration of hats, more unarmed get-togethers, more dancing, more tasting of spareribs. →

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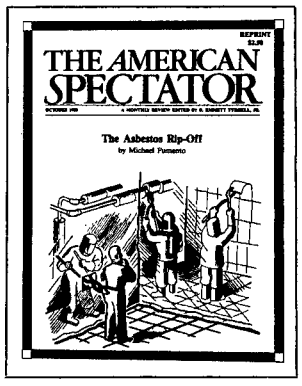

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One might quibble that an unconquered West would have been not a motorist's multiracial paradise (a dreamland too dull for dreamers, especially admirers of Crazy Horse) but a no-man's land of warring tribes, where no van would be complete without its rifle rack; even Frazier's dream West seems to be the Wild West, an "obligingly blank backdrop" where men struggle and wrest a living (or sport) from nature. But such is the delirious atmosphere of the Plains. "Joy like this is so rare in me as to be endangered. Did people used to feel like this all the time? Was this what those old-timers were looking for, and finding, on the Great Plains?" Without describing his stop at Custer Battlefield, Frazier even produces a novel reason for liking General Custer—a life which "demonstrates the power of a person having fun." He *wants* to believe that the mortally wounded Boy General, as allegedly recounted by Sitting Bull, laughed as he fell: "I like to believe Custer even had fun dying."

Frazier's regional theme is the decline of the land and its population. He fears that the Plains do not ingratiate, are not pretty enough even to attract the sympathies of ecologists: "They seldom photograph well or rather, they are seldom photographed." They are landscapes so barren that once, for want of anything else to look at, Frazier finds himself walking over to examine an object dropped by a bird. But in such a place ruins last, and whatever history there was casts a long shadow. A sign near an abandoned Texas home describes a getaway by Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, adding: "In this quiet region, the escape is now legend." But of course.

Nowadays, the past seems almost nonexistent, even contemptible: on TV, the cop says to the criminal, "Reach for that gun and you're history." But, for many places on the Great Plains, the past is much more colorful and exciting and populous than the present. Historical markers are everywhere. In many towns I stopped in, the public buildings were a store, a gas station, and a museum.

Frazier visits the Bob Wills Museum in the singer's hometown of Turkey, Texas, and finds Lincoln, New Mexico, preserved by its outlaw heritage: "Because Billy the Kid danced on it, the courthouse balcony endures." There *must* be a past; hence Frazier's contempt for strip mining, which leaves none—and no year to think about but that of the mining: "It is impossible to imagine a Cheyenne war party coming out of the canyon, because the canyon is gone."

But Frazier spends little time in lamentation, none in despair. "A person can be amazingly happy on the Great Plains. Friends have told me the joy they felt, say, driving from Sheridan, Wyoming, to Hardin, Montana. . . . Once happiness gets rolling in this open place, not much stops it." Readers who have not yet traveled the Plains will get to know the feeling—which is perhaps the highest compliment one can pay this modest, appetizing book. □

IRWIN SHAW: A BIOGRAPHY

Michael Shnayerson/G. P. Putnam's Sons/447 pp. $24.95

Lionel Abel

On the cover of Michael Shnayerson's biography of Irwin Shaw there is a photo of the youthful Shaw at his typewriter. He must have been in his early twenties when this picture was taken, and he looks innocent enough to have qualified for advice from the "wise man" of Housman's poem: "Give crowns and pounds and guineas/ But not your heart away." Handsome, unlined, sharp-featured, yet ardent and idealistic, the face of the young Shaw we see in that photo is oh so different from the face of the same writer some five decades later looking back at us from the cover of his collected *Short Stories*. Here we see a face flesh-packed and jowly, and the look of a man who has learned not to care at all after having cared somewhat, a man who may have (in fact, had) given away crowns and pounds and guineas but not his heart to any particular woman or for that matter to the art of writing.

But if Irwin Shaw did not give his heart to any other person, to any cause, or to his art, then why is his life worth recounting? In fact, what was his life? Who can care now, be saddened or excited, by his many successes with women? What if at the very start of his career he made it to bed with Helen Lawrenson of *Vanity Fair*? He may figure as one of Lawrenson's triumphs rather than she as one of his. And in any case, the accidental ups and downs of dealing with editors, publishers, producers, and women one has disappointed do not, I think, make a life interesting.

The question is: What does? Here I am reminded of Goethe's response when asked: What were the interesting periods of history? Those, he remarked, when men believed in something. Is this not also true of persons? For persons tend to become interesting to us if we learn that they held something dear. Now what did Irwin Shaw hold dear? Nothing apparently; not peace, not revolution, and not his art, and he was involved with too many women to have loved any one of them. He seems to have lived by the cynical French adage: "One nail drives out another." But if Shaw lacked all conviction, is not this the very description Yeats gave of those he called "the best"? These "best" Yeats set off against the "worst," whom he thought filled with "passionate intensity." Perhaps it is because we have just seen the "worst"—I'm speaking of the Communists, of course—renege on intensity, that we can now think of questioning Yeats's description of the "best," which is beginning to look like an oxymoron: Can those lacking all conviction be reasonably called the "best"? I do not think so, and thus I cannot include Irwin Shaw among the best in any department, in life or in literature.

And this may also be the opinion of his biographer, for Shnayerson ends his book with this overall judgment of Shaw: ". . . a life well lived. A man could do worse." Is it possible to miss the implication that many have done better?

Lionel Abel, professor emeritus at the State University of New York at Buffalo, is author of Metatheatre, The Intellectual Follies, *and, most recently,* Important Nonsense *(Prometheus Books).*

The serious critical judgments of Shaw as a writer and as a person, and most particularly as a person involved in politics, all make the same point: whatever Shaw's views were, he managed not to suffer because of them. *Time* put the matter thus: "Before the war, Irwin Shaw won easy fame and money by turning out smooth and clever plays and stories—for many tastes . . ." Diana Trilling described his swings of political opinion as in line with the equivocations of liberal ideology: "When liberalism took its boldest stand on a hatred of war, Mr. Shaw raised the bones of the war dead. When liberalism had its surfeit of quietism, Mr. Shaw issued the call to action." Making an analogous point, the young Leslie Fiedler wrote: "The way Shaw has chosen seems to me finally intolerable: to be just right always—not a Communist a month past the time when being a Communist seems (to the most enlightened) a creditable excess; not against a war a month past the point when true liberalism demands it." Now this judgment is not invalidated, as Shnayerson thinks, by the fact that Shaw was never a card-carrying Communist; neither was the very wary Harold Clurman, who was, however, pro-Communist during the thirties in the precise sense Fiedler charged Irwin Shaw with hav-

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ing been. Being pro-Communist in those days was a way of avoiding the risks Communists had to face.

So I agree with Fiedler's *moral* judgment of Shaw, and also with his inference that it has bearing on Shaw's *literary* worth. On the other hand, I have to take exception to the following (I think overheated) attack by Fiedler on *all* of Shaw's writings. (Rereading it today, one wants to ask Fiedler the question Macduff addresses to the messenger bringing word that all his children had been slaughtered: "Did you say all?") Reviewing Shaw's novel *Lucy Crown* for *Commentary*, Fiedler went on to attack the author's whole output: "His books and plays with their breathless pursuit of the very latest liberaloid-cliche problem, his improbable dialogue (only he himself apparently talks like his own characters), his limp, watery prose are scarcely worth more than the sentence it takes to describe them." This judgment I think wide of the mark if intended—I think it was—to describe Shaw's short stories, as well as his novels and plays. I have looked again into Shaw's short stories, and I find many of them excellent, not written in "watery prose" and still deserving of praise. I would include among those of Shaw's stories I continue to admire not only the rightly famous "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses," but also the following tales, less often cited or anthologized: "The Deputy Sheriff," "The Man Who Had a French Wife," and "The House of Pain." But I cannot agree with the praise generally given "Sailor Off the Bremen," with its implicit support for the rowdy violence the Communists made popular during the thirties.

Fiedler was right in the main about Shaw's writings, which is to say about his novels and plays. But Fiedler was wrong and unfair about Shaw's stories, those which, early in his career, appeared in the *New Yorker*. So I have to agree in a way with the judgment of Harold Ross that when Shaw began to write for Hollywood (his novels were really meant to be films: the only thing I can remember of *The Young Lions* is Marlon Brando's performance in the lead part) he stopped being the writer the editors of the *New Yorker* had taken him to be. I say that I agree with Harold Ross on this point and I do, but only in part. I agree that Shaw's dereliction from literary values became more pronounced when he opted for Hollywood, but the *cause* of his dereliction was evident before that, as Trilling and Fiedler noted. It lay in his subservience to the shifts of liberal opinion, which may have been more powerful in Hollywood then than around the *New Yorker*, though that is hardly the case today. As for Ross's advice to writers—Give up worldly things and write for the *New Yorker*—that seems to me absurd. For the *New Yorker* has been unswerving in its pursuit of worldly *opinion*, indistinguishable for me from the worldly *things* sung of in the ads it carries. For me the review cannot genuinely represent an extreme of literary virtue as against the fleshpots of Hollywood. It rather stands for a mean path of competent and, in fact, well-rewarded writing between the poles of extreme devotion to literary values as exemplified by the little magazines and commercial writing as such. And I think Shaw tried to follow a mean path, though one of his own devising, and not the one the *New Yorker* editors prescribed.

But in his short stories Irwin Shaw aimed only at literary excellence, and I believe, achieved it, though I do not think his stories quite on a level with the best tales of Faulkner or Hemingway. Reading them again, I noticed there are in them very few descriptions of sensation, something which modern writers have favored and at which they have excelled. Why is this? I think it is because moderns tend to be skeptical of general notions, and the sharpness of sensation rivets one's attention. One has to believe in what cannot be summarily dismissed. Thus Mallarme's preference for "the horror of the forest" to the "dense, intrinsic wood of the trees" which so influenced Joyce, Hemingway, and Faulkner, but a taste for which is not to be found in Shaw's prose. And this, I think, is the reason Shaw's writing, even in his stories, is so lacking in poetry. We never feel in his prose the "uncanniness" of language, its "peal of silence," which according to Heidegger we hear in genuine poetry. Now we do hear the "peal of silence" in the language of Faulkner's "The Bear," and in Hemingway's "A Clean, Well Lighted Place."

As for Michael Shnayerson's biography, it should be clear from what I have already said that I find it lacking in critical judgment. The author does not seem to realize that a life of Irwin Shaw has to be in addition a work of literary criticism. And Mr. Shnayerson shows little alertness to rhetorical values not right on the surface; he often misses such values when they are perfectly evident. I shall give one instance of his judgment: his evaluation of Shaw's story "Flash in the Pan," no doubt occasioned by the failure of the various plays Shaw wrote after the success of his *Bury the Dead*. In this story, which is about a playwright, we are told that while the writer is able to bring off fine first acts, he is not able to develop or conclude a whole play. Now the same has been said of Ionesco, a master playwright, judged to be that entirely on the basis of his one-act plays. But as Kenneth Tynan noted, there are sprinters in the theatre as well as middle distance runners, and Ionesco is a sprinter. Now this is an entirely different notion from the very questionable one that there is a talent for starting a full-length play, quite unlike the talent for finishing one. Here we have a thought right out of Hollywood, where different writers are called on to start, develop, and conclude a script. This was a notion which, it appears from his story, Irwin Shaw also held. But I think it was unworthy of him. Now Shnayerson, citing Shaw's story, sees nothing wrong with the Hollywood values that structure it. Which tells me that he is not enough of a critic to evaluate Shaw's writings, or the life he led. □

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WEAK LINK: THE FEMINIZATION OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY

Brian Mitchell/Regnery Gateway/232 pp. $17.95

Fr. Alexander F. C. Webster

"The feminization of the American military is perhaps the greatest peacetime military deception ever perpetrated."

With that opening salvo, Brian Mitchell mounts a full-scale assault on one of the sacred cows of the contemporary American military. His mission is to show the American people that their military empresses have no clothes. He bares all the relevant facts, garnered from sociological studies and the official reports of several service branches. And he reveals the stark, naked truth that the continued presence of so many thousands of uniformed women in the armed forces of the United States not only has eroded the morale of the majority of male soldiers, sailors, and airmen and undermined the classic military values of hierarchical command, obedience, and self-abnegation. The expanding role of these women has also crippled our very national defense posture!

Brian Mitchell may expect a murderous counterfire from the feminists and their cronies in government, academe, and the upper echelons of the military establishment, who receive the brunt of his criticism. He may even find his present position in jeopardy as a reporter for the *Navy Times*. But if Mitchell proves unable to fend off the fusillades of his opponents, he is nevertheless prepared by training and temperament to go down fighting.

A seven-year veteran of the U.S. Army, Mitchell served as an Airborne-Ranger infantry officer and intelligence agent, demonstrating his military moxie by earning the Expert Infantryman Badge and senior parachutist wings. He's been there. And now that he's out of uniform, he can, unhampered by the same military discipline and honor code currently in jeopardy, demythologize the new feminist orthodoxy and expose the Big Lie that the feminist zealots have foisted on the military and the American people.

Despite occasional militaristic depictions of women in classic mythologies, the American military ethos has never incorporated the distaff side of humanity. There are no Valkyries or Amazons or helmet-clad Athenas in our collective consciousness. For every un-uniformed Molly Pitcher who has taken up arms in the heat of battle, there have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Betsy Rosses, whose contributions to national security are strictly supportive rather than directly in the line of fire. Even in World War II—the era of the legendary "Rosie the Riveter," the *civilian* role model for women—the number of women in military uniform was negligible.

Enter the feminists. Mitchell's juxtaposition of the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment and the institution of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in the early 1970s may seem somewhat contrived. And his narrative goes into a tailspin in the last two chapters after expending all of his ammunition fulminating against feminism in contemporary American society. But Mitchell is right on target in linking the burgeoning feminist-dominated "women's movement" with the proliferation of women in military uniform.

The feminists and their weak-willed accomplices within the upper echelons of the military services and the Department of Defense conquered this previously all-male bastion by executing perfectly a classic three-pronged attack. The three phases of this political and ideological warfare may be termed "reshaping," "reclassifying," and "redefining." In each phase the advocates of women in uniform vigorously sought to overturn traditional views and practices by all manner of means at their disposal including, ultimately, the Big Lie.

First, the reshaping of values substituted "equality" and "androgyny" for the more familiar virtues entailed in a masculine, hierarchical community. Though an obvious oxymoron, the "androgynous warrior" became the military ideal for cadets and midshipmen at the service academies during the 1970s. In accordance with militant feminist orthodoxy, distinctions between the genders, whether physical or psychological, were either minimized to allow women entry into traditionally male jobs and units or stressed when the survival of women in their new assignments was at stake. The issue of physical strength is typical. When women soldiers, sailors, and airmen failed as a group to meet even minimal requirements of physical readiness, the military established separate, significantly lower "standards" for women, while protesting, seemingly innocently, that it was not fostering a double standard. When this tack proved ludicrous, the next move was to pretend that the difference was unimportant. The emerging "androgynous" ideal simply devalues physical prowess as a military virtue.

Second, the most obvious biological obstacle to female warriorness—pregnancy—was supposedly bypassed by reclassifying this God-given, uniquely female privilege as a "temporary disability." This brainchild of civilian feminists placed the military, however, into a double-bind. If a pregnant service member elects to leave the service, she increases the attrition rate and undermines the stability of her unit. If she chooses, however, to stay, her activities become so restricted that she poses a burden to her fellow soldiers, since they must pick up the slack for the duration of her "disability." In its zeal to guarantee women's "rights," the feminized military establishment ignores the disturbing impact of pregnant soldiers on their comrades. Mitchell describes eloquently the role conflict between mothers and warriors: "The killing spirit and motherly love are necessarily inimical to each other, and . . . where the two are combined, the one is weakened and the other perverted."

Third, the champions of women in uniform have resorted to verbal flimflams while redefining concepts such as fraternization, single-parenthood, and combat.

Fraternization used to mean any social involvement between officers and enlisted men. It was a clear distinction and a matter of good discipline in preparation for combat, when authority, not friendship, might lead to victory. In the more permissive military resulting from the widespread presence of women, officers need only avoid social contact with those under their own command. This has opened a Pandora's box of imprudent trysts between men and women in uniform irrespective of rank.

The Pentagon began in 1980 to include as single parents not only those parents with actual custody of children but those who merely pay child support. Thus it could claim disingenuously that three-quarters of single-parents in the military are males and conveniently deny the charge that single-parenthood is a predominantly female problem, which erodes unit cohesion and siphons off valuable resources that could be devoted to military missions.

The redefinition of "combat" leads to the heart of the problem as Mitchell sees it. To meet the demands of the feminists, the Pentagon has yielded so much ground on the question of women in combat roles that in any major conflict thousands of women would certainly find themselves effectively engaged in battle. The modern battlefield is so fluid that even support elements in what was once known as the "rear" would be subject to direct attack. But to allow women to serve in a wider array of military specialties, the meaning of combat has been refined to the rarefied level of direct physical contact between opposing forces at close range. Even this shell game has not satisfied the most ardent feminists, who continue to insist that the restrictions on women in combat be eliminated altogether.

Mitchell never explains systematically how military women have eroded our national defense. Scattered throughout an essentially historical narrative one may find anecdotal evidence pointing to the adverse effects of women on the presumed ability of the U.S. armed forces to fulfill their classic mission: to engage and prevail over the enemy in battle. This evidence includes, for example, the Army's selection of inferior pistols and rifles to accommodate women's lesser physical strength, the greater medical non-availability and attrition rates of women, and challenges to male-bonding and the morale of the male service members.

The author's solution to this problem is also far-fetched and unrealistic. "The AVF might still exploit the need for young American men to prove themselves," Mitchell concludes, "and easily make up the number of women now in service, if it aggressively portrayed itself as a place for men only." He would simply scuttle the Army's recruitment slogan, "Be all you can be!" and replace it with the Marine Corps' version, "We're looking for a few good men!" Not bad on paper: dumping a selfish, individualistic, career-oriented appeal in favor of a true warrior's call to arms. But the women in uniform are now so firmly entrenched that there is no chance they will abandon their military careers in large numbers—at least not without a fight.

Perhaps Mitchell has instigated a new guerrilla war for the body and soul of the American military. It is hardly a coincidence that that body has acquired a more distinct feminine form even as its soul has, since the inglorious American withdrawal from Vietnam, suffered a crisis of confidence and an erosion of the will to fight. □

Fr. Alexander F. C. Webster, a senior research associate at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, is a chaplain (captain) in the Virginia Army National Guard, having served previously on active duty in Fort Ord, California.

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Denver is a great place if you're a dog. They haven't got many fleas here, and heartworm's unheard of. But it goes beyond that. Denver makes a dog feel at home.

I moved here near the middle of September, flying out with Shot Sharkrifle—a lowborn English setter—while the rest of the family put our Virginia affairs in order. When we left Washington—I in economy, Shot in cargo—it was 80 degrees; when we landed three and a half hours later, it was snowing.

Poor old Shot had shed most of his fur back East and stood shaking in the cold West wind while I called for lodging from a payphone. On a hunch, I asked the Holiday Inn receptionist if they took dogs.

"Of course," she said. A comparison shopper, I called another hotel, which didn't. The third place, a Days Inn, also took dogs and was fifteen dollars cheaper per night. Delighted, we got back in the rental car, which by now bore an eight-dollar parking ticket. Law and order is not an abstraction here in the West.

Capitol Hill in Denver is what they call a transitional neighborhood. Our motor inn sat near a block-long strip of sex shops, numerous liquor stores (one with a drive-through window), and a nightclub featuring music by an ensemble called the Butthole Surfers, a popular local group. There's a knifing now and then and one young man was arrested in my hotel for doing a striptease before an appreciative audience of vice-squad officers, who repaid the favor by booking him on a male prostitution charge. As you can see, this isn't the boondocks.

As Shot and I strolled around the hill many residents stopped to pet the old boy, often engaging him in conversation, but not of the type that passes twixt a matron and her poodle. Up on Capitol Hill (one of the steps leading into the capitol building rests 5,280 feet above sea level) the chief subjects are women, weather, and women. There was also some uniformity in the perorations, which seemed to follow this model: "Pooch, you think your master might be able to spare old Rick a buck?" This is the Capitol Hill version of the request to share the Grey Poupon.

Which isn't to say that it's all take and no give. On a Sunday afternoon, when a six-pack of Foster's would go well with the Broncos game, Shot and I walk to the drive-through window at Scooter's Liquors, where the cashier completes the transaction with a friendly request to come back. As we turn to leave, he calls "Wait a minute," then leans out the window and gives Shot a milkbone.

Denver's a nice place for people too, although it isn't all that's advertised in the East. Knowledgeable Washington sources insisted my allergy problems would end once I hit the Mile High City, which has not been the case. Others said it was pretty much like an Eastern city in habits and manners. Also untrue.

On my first day of work, for instance, I attended a press luncheon hosted by the University of Colorado. After talking with several of the female officials (some of whom bore facial moles their vainglorious sisters in Washington would not have tolerated), I sat down and chatted amiably with my table mates. After salad was served all around, I dug in.

"I guess we aren't going to say grace," said a woman sitting across from me.

"Well I don't know," said the woman to my right, whose fork lay reverently beside her plate.

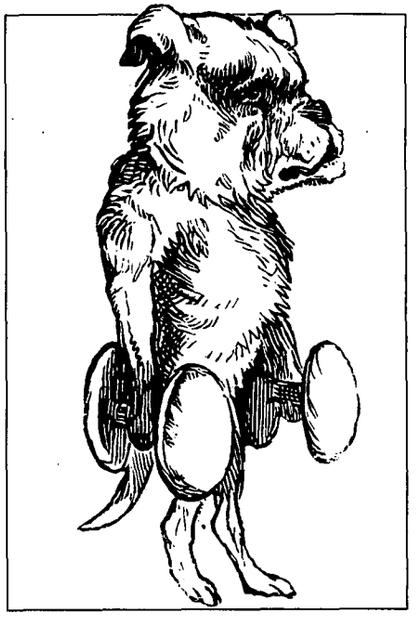
I asked forgiveness for rushing into things, explaining that I had just arrived from Washington, where the only time we say grace is April 15, in anticipation of the incoming tax receipts. We all had a laugh, then it was explained that public lunches often begin with a prayer. Not an eye rolled as this information was imparted.

This isn't to say that everyone in Denver is so civilized. During another lunch, this one on the 16th Street Mall, [redacted], for this is a semi-arid [redacted]en come the Mexican sod [redacted]Then comes the bill: for us, [redacted]d $5,000, not including a fence, [redacted]n will cost $1,500 more. mud, [redacted] whistles, a[redacted] the company swung a pi[redacted]hose around his head.

Taking in these modern processions is the occasional Indian, the occasional one of which is so drunk he redefines the word. But there is something different: he staggers, he falls, he lurches in front of cars, but when he turns, you see a sky-deep gaze, a flash in the eyes of a corpse. Here is a brilliant soul trapped in a coffin, and he seems to want out bad.

The Welcome Wagon lady came a couple of weeks after the furniture arrived, leaving behind several helpful publications and some knickknacks, including a key ring from Drinkwine's Mortuary. Having just talked to the yardman, I might be heading over there soon.

The problem is that the soil has a heavy clay content and you have to work at getting grass to grow. The usual method, at least in the area where we live, is to lay sod. First you need to bring in tractors to bust up the clay. Then you dump in a lot of sheep and cow manure, plus peat. Next comes the



But it's beautiful down near the foothills. At sunset, clouds over the mountains turn bright gold, while across on the other horizon the sky turns bright red. The youngest boy took it all in one evening and announced that in Colorado there are two suns. On other days you can sun yourself on the patio while watching thunderheads fire broadsides into the earth thirty miles away.

Just beyond the foothills, a mind used to focusing on continuing resolutions and other bits of life's small print is confronted by 14,000-foot peaks and a blazing blue sky. The mind stretches and the head spins. You also see people, like the man trout fishing at 8,000 feet.

"Hell, I know all about your Eastern mountains," he says. "We've got dump piles bigger than them."

And unlike those smaller mountains, many of the roads winding up the Rockies are short on guardrails. I tell the fisherman that in Washington, not only are there rails on the bridges, there are suicide fences as well.

"Out here," he says, "if you want to drive off the mountain, we consider that your business."

Back home, we watch the sun set behind the foothills. If you rise early enough, you might see a coyote in the field out back, or a mule deer. Within the last couple of months there have been over 200 bear sightings, and up north a bit a kid was pulled off his bike by a mountain lion. He did not survive.

We found a black widow in the family room, and it's nothing for Shot to kick up a big jackrabbit in the field behind the house. He gives chase but they run away from him as if he were standing still.

Most of the time, however, Shot prefers lying in the dirt chewing on a bone while the rest of us gawk at the great immensity, like the Kettles in Manhattan. The bones are free at the local supermarket and the butcher leaves on plenty of meat. I tell you, the only way we'll ever get this dog to leave this place is to shoot him. □

Dave Shiflett is deputy editorial page editor at the Rocky Mountain News *and* The American Spectator*'s first Rocky Mountain editor.*

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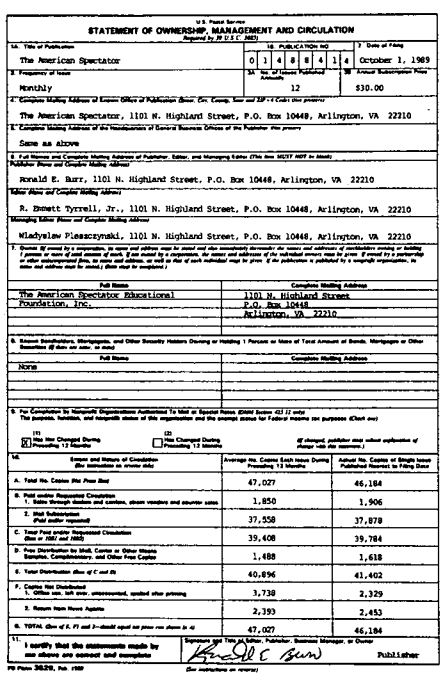
CORRESPONDENCE
(continued from page 9)

burned just as hot as the Yellowstone fires and he would be impressed at the recovery that has taken place. So the Park Service is basically correct in its claim that fire is a natural part of the Yellowstone "ecosystem" and that the area will recover. However, years must pass before the area regains the appearance it had before the fires. By then it will be ready for another conflagration unless management changes.

The Park Service faces a dilemma in its management of the National Parks because its mandate is preservation, while the areas it is supposed to preserve persist in changing. Vegetational types that are the result of fire require fire to preserve them. Without fire, other species that do not tolerate burning invade and the entire complex, including associated wildlife, changes. The Park Service has had to reintroduce fire in the Everglades to preserve the unique nature of the area. They have had to use fire in Kings Canyon–Sequoia National Parks to prevent the development of a heavy shrub layer that would have changed not only the appearance but accessibility. They have probably had to manage other vegetational types, but I happen to know about those two.

It is ironic that "multiple-use" management is much closer to what happens naturally than attempts to preserve, yet the environmentalists want still more area designated as "wilderness," which would exclude all management measures. These groups adamantly oppose clear-cutting and even-aged management of the National Forests, yet this system produces all the benefits claimed for the Yellowstone fires, but in a much more complete and controlled way, and without the losses and damage caused by uncontrolled fire.



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PS Form 3526, Feb 1989 (See instructions on reverse)

The Park Service and the Forest Service held a number of public meetings to assess reaction to the fires. As a result the "let-it-burn" policy has been drastically revised. Fire management plans will be prepared for all parks and wilderness areas to include prescriptions for fires that will be allowed to burn. The prescriptions are based on the factors that determine intensity and have been used by the Forest Service for many years with success. All other fires will be suppressed. No fires will be allowed to burn freely without a prescription or suppression action.

Morrison should inform himself of the difference between wilderness and multiple-use areas. He stated that the conservative group ". . . aligns itself with the U.S. Forest Service concepts of 'multiple use' of wilderness areas." "Wilderness" are areas set aside by Congress under the Wilderness Act of 1964 to be left completely undisturbed. They are not managed under the multiple-use policy. The remainder of the National Forests are managed under the multiple-use policy in compliance with a number of other laws, although the Wilderness Act applies to them as well as other federal lands.

Morrison's "experienced outdoorsman" should also have told him that the majority of "shoots" never survive anywhere with any species under any natural conditions. Of the thousands of seedlings that may become established after a fire, a third may die the first year and many more during the next few years. Mortality continues at a declining rate throughout the life of the stand, so that at maturity no more than one hundred trees may be left. Even when nursery-grown seedlings are planted on prepared sites, only one hundred or so will reach maturity. . . .

I hope that my comments will be helpful to Morrison in writing his book about the Yellowstone fires. . . .

—Karl F. Wenger
Burgess, Virginia

What a Waste

Michael McGough's article on women's ordination to the priesthood ("The Lefebvrite-Feminist Coalition?" *TAS*, August 1989) was a waste of paper. One does not read *TAS* for theology, of course, but this piece contained no news and no ideas. Your hero Mencken would have been ashamed of you for failing even to come up with a credible slander of the Christian religion.

I object mostly to the smugness with which McGough protects his ignorance regarding the dogma of the apostolic succession. Modern scholars think that the structure of the threefold ministry was not fully defined and differentiated during the apostolic period, and McGough managed to find a statement from an Anglican-Roman dialogue (ARCIC) on that subject. This is not to say, however, *that the ordained* ministry is discontinuous. That is a different subject. Bishops are mentioned in the New Testament, and only a scholar who regards that text as a complete forgery would doubt the continuity of the episcopate. Belief in the succession is one of ARCIC's premises.

Granted, McGough regards the concept of priesthood as a superstition. But he refers constantly to the concept of sacramental validity without displaying a hint of curiosity about what it means to the people he's discussing, or offering the barest definition, even a satirical one. When noting the distinction between validity and legality (what is "licit"), he offers the brilliant comment that his distinction is "legalistic."

Now let me tell you the news. The controversy over lady priests has a context: the conflict throughout Western society between cultural traditionalists, who believe in the reality of human nature, and gnostic liberals who are captive to the lesbian-witch feminists (see Elizabeth Kristol's piece on "herstory" in the July issue). Among other things, the priesthood is a symbol of faith, and that is why people are fighting over it.

You also ought to know (as McGough fails to report) that the creation of the first lady bishop by the Episcopal Church in February hit the Anglican Communion like an earthquake. Most Anglicans in the world regard her as neither licit nor valid, and the consequences of that arrogant liberal act are only beginning.

If you don't care, then save the trees!

—T. John Jamieson
Chairman, Chicago Chapter of
the Prayer Book Society of
the Episcopal Church
Evanston, Illinois

It Was Just a Joke

I am a relatively new subscriber, and my only complaint up to now is that, as soon as a new issue of *The American Spectator* arrives, I sit down and read it, often to the detriment of whatever I happened to be working on before the mail arrived. But the piece about Brigitte Bardot in "The Continuing Crisis" from the September 1989 issue has moved me to write. You can turn a bull into a steer, or a stallion into a gelding, but the same procedure will most definitely *not* turn a donkey into a mule. In order to get a mule you must first mate a male donkey (I hope you haven't castrated him already) to a female horse. The resulting offspring is called a mule.

—John A. Flanders
Columbia, Missouri

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CURRENT WISDOM

Modesto Bee

"Every day I'm open to struggle"? "I feel virginal"? La Fonda's years with Hayden have led to dementia—or worse:

Jane Fonda, recently separated from Tom Hayden, her husband of 17 years, says she is gingerly stepping out, eager to embrace new opportunities and situations. Of her impending divorce, she only has one thing to say: "Once you get over the shock, it's not so bad." "I feel like a virgin," she told the *Miami Herald*. "I mean that everything is new to me. That's why I feel virginal, sexually and emotionally. I feel like every day I have a new coat of skin, every day I'm open to struggle."

[October 5, 1989]

Ms.

Political discourse of an exigent nature enlivens the rich, vibrant dialectic of feminism's foremost intellectual review and asylum for the clinically insane:

By the time I was 12, my bra size was 36D. I think it's absolutely disgusting that I am now forced to wear "full figure" bras and queen-size pantyhose, and shop in "Chubby Lovely's Polyester Caftan and Blimp Cover Boutique." Not only is the clothing made poorly, out of fashion, and overpriced—I'm not fat! I'm only ten pounds above what my family doctor's height-weight chart says, which is more than absorbed in my ample breast size.

I do not like being made to feel fat, worthless, and ugly because of my bone structure and genetic curves. And I do not like being punished because I am not "ideal." This idea stinks. I'd rather look at statues of ancient goddesses, who had beautiful and ample nurturing flesh.

—Caitlin S. Helphrey
Huntington Beach, California
[September 1989]

Nation

For the care-worn Communist who still subscribes to this fabulous weekly review, a reassuring interpretation of recent headline news:

The exodus of thousands of youthful East Germans across the Austro-Hungarian border cannot be interpreted, as some Western commentators would have it, as an abandonment of the teaching of Karl Marx. To be sure, the emigrants are hoping for a better life than they found under the East German regime. But the country to which they are traveling, from their homes and vacation tents, in buses and clunky "Trabbi" cars, is not Thatcher's Britain or *après*-Reagan America.

It is a nation with a highly organized system of political benefits and social security, job protection and workers' participation in management. It is also a society that does not stint on public services or public expenditures, for culture and education or for scientific research and industrial policy.

True, it is a capitalist society. . . .

[October 2, 1989]

Vegetarian Times

The making of another American legend as reported by Mrs. J. S. of Rochester, New York:

I became a vegetarian about a year ago, but my husband continued to cling to the "four-basic-food-groups" mentality he was raised with. I had a very hard time getting him to admit—make that *believe*—that I had changed my life so dramatically. . . .

Then came that snowy night—one of those upstate New York winter evenings the rest of the country only reads about—when we ordered a pizza from our favorite parlor. As usual, I ordered my half with cheese and mushrooms and allowed my husband his half with pepperoni.

The delivery man handed us our pizza about an hour later, then ran through the fast-falling snow to his car. When we opened the box to find pepperoni on the whole pizza, I said nothing and walked into the den to watch TV, content to sulk now and make a salad later.

But my husband acted extraordinarily. He pulled on his boots and ran out into the snow to catch the delivery car as it was pulling out of the driveway. He brought the man into the house and together they called the store. The manager offered us a gift certificate for a free pizza if we would keep the one we had and let it go at that.

"That won't do," I heard my husband say. "My wife's a vegetarian."

We got the pizza we wanted, but more than that, I heard what I had been waiting a whole year to hear—my husband's affirmation of my new lifestyle.

[September 1989]

Austin American-Statesman

Many months have passed. Ronald W. Reagan is comfortably in retirement. George Herbert Walker Bush is now President. Yet the undisciplined minds of American boob journalism remain stuck on their laments of 1987. Consider this from Mr. Jim Fain, national correspondent for Cox newspapers and formerly a hat-check girl at The Palm:

Ronald Reagan's paramount achievement as president has been overlooked. It was total victory over his ancient enemy, Washington.

Reagan used a cunning strategy. He brought the government of the United States to its knees by rotting it from within. In a classic Trojan Horse maneuver, he deployed his amiable personality as cover for the greatest army of brigands in the history of the Republic.

The result: a Guinness record for corruption—Harding's was small beer by comparison—and epidemic cynicism about government that will cripple any initiative as far as the naked eye can see. . . . Won't last, though. Governments exist to do things. If we hadn't needed them, we wouldn't have started them. Let the first real crisis erupt (a palpable environmental threat to the planet?), and we'll be back trying to rebuild some of the very government smarts and moxie we've watched the Gipper all but exterminate.

[October 7, 1989]

Nation

The delirious condition of poor Alexander Cockburn, three years after President Mikhail Gorbachev joined Rotary and became a faithful member of the Knights of Pythias:

Now, fifty years since the sirens sounded following Chamberlain's speech announcing the start of war, on September 3, 1939, many Americans probably follow Reagan's lead, symbolized by his jaunt to Bitburg, in believing that the anniversaries of the war celebrate an alliance between the United States and Germany against the Soviet Union. Certainly for many the memory of the pact burns brighter than, say, Stalingrad. The cold warriors fight on.

[September 18, 1989]

New York Times

Revolutionary thunder from the felicitously denominated Miss Letty Cottin Pogrebin, feminist theoretician and bomb thrower:

I love eating out—especially out of the country. . . . What makes a meal stick to the memory as well as the ribs is some kind of metaphysical alchemy that transmutes sustenance into sensibility.

[October 8, 1989]

Tropic Times

Lively news items appearing in one of the news organs of the United States Army:

QUARRY HEIGHTS (US SOUTHCOM PAO)— Two members of the U.S. forces were relieved of some of their money—one at gunpoint—by uniformed members of the Panama Defense Forces in two incidents in the past few days.

A U.S. citizen Navy civilian employee was stopped on the Trans-Isthmian Highway about 6:45 p.m. Saturday, at which time three PDF members entered the back seat of his vehicle.

They demanded $40 there or $80 at the National Investigations Department, or DENI, station. After the employee paid them $40, the three thanked him, shook his hand, and departed the scene without further incident.

At noon Monday, a U.S. Army South soldier was stopped by a PDF Transito (traffic) officer named Garibaldo on Tumba Muerto near the McDonald's restaurant and the El Dorado shopping center.

The Transit officer jumped in the soldier's car, pointed a gun at his side, and demanded his wallet. After taking the money, the PDF member dropped the wallet and departed.

These incidents bring to six the number of reported incidents of this type committed by the Panama Defense Forces this year, five of them since early May.

In light of these incidents, members of the U.S. military community are reminded to exercise caution while driving off-post. Drive with windows up and doors locked.

[September 29, 1989]

New York Times

A Democratic Congress led by such spectacular frauds as Jim Wright and Tony Coelho brings the S&L industry to ruin, as reported so fastidiously in this journal of record, and look who Anthony Lewis pins the blame on:

Self-indulgence is good for us: That was the message of the Reagan years. And how we wanted to believe it. "It's morning again in America," the Reagan TV spot said in the 1984 campaign. We were convinced.

Now it is the morning after. The reckoning is starting to come in for those eight years. We see that the indulgence in private greed exacted a heavy public cost, one that will burden our children and grandchildren.

The savings and loan scandal was a squalid case of private enrichment at public expense. S & L officials used their depositors' money on worthless loans and yachts for themselves. Most of the cost of repaying the insured depositors will fall on us.

Eleven lubricious paragraphs later and the crank returns to a timeless theme:

The intangible costs of the Reagan years to our domestic tranquility are surely greater than what can be measured in dollars. They are the costs of hostility to the role of government, of indulgence toward private greed, of insensitivity to the needs of the weak in our society.

Ronald Reagan saw a Hobbesian jungle out there and liked it. He believed, with unquestionable sincerity, that we would all be better off if the strong and the rich were left free to act, even at the expense of the less fortunate.

Americans are naturally skeptical of government, so it was not surprising that they responded to the Reagan message. But in real life there is no safety or humanity for anyone unless the society as a whole is a decent one. Hobbes, in the 17th century, said that life without organized society would be nasty, brutish and short.

[September 7, 1989]

PEN Newsletter

Paranoia from a proud opsimath:

Though we agree with all that has been said in opposition to the Ayatollah's death threat against Salman Rushdie and are uncompromising in support of the principle of free speech, there are many of us in the international peace movement who worry that the Rushdie affair might have diverted attention from other vital issues of free speech and could help to create a new front for a "cold war" and a new justification for a nuclearized and militarized economy. We wonder: If poor Rushdie were assassinated, would it be by a Moslem terrorist bullet or a C.I.A. think-tank plot? We know that history explains how Archduke Ferdinand's assassination, the Battle of the Alamo, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor were engineered into rallying cries for profiteering warmongers. We are aware of newly unveiled facts surrounding the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and . . .

—Daniela Gioseffi
[August 1989]

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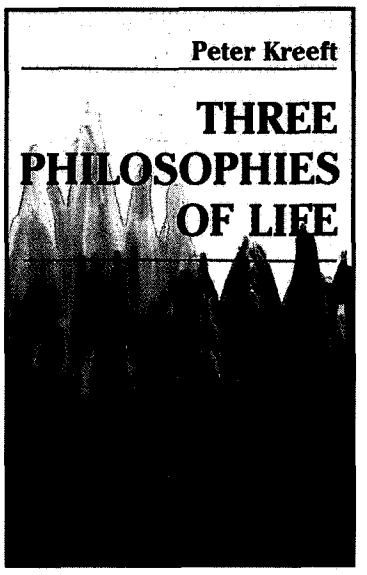

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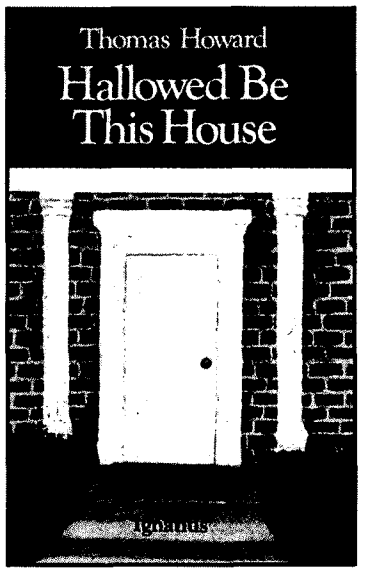

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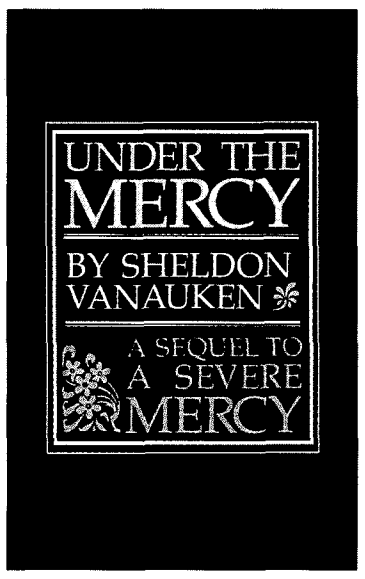

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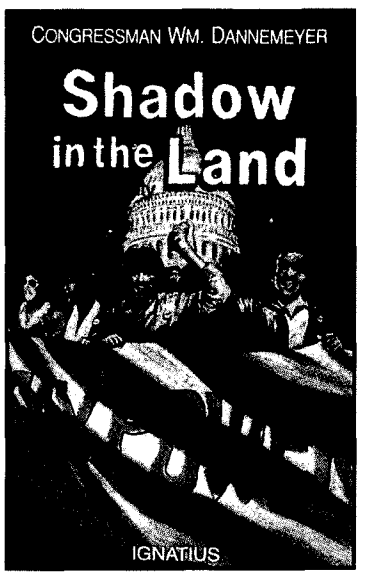

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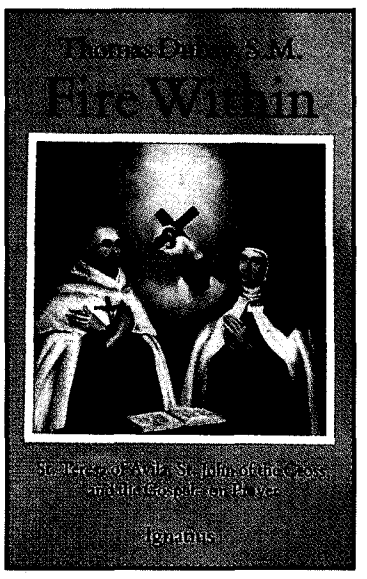

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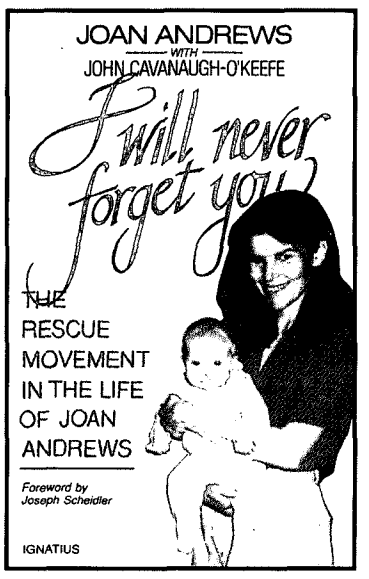

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